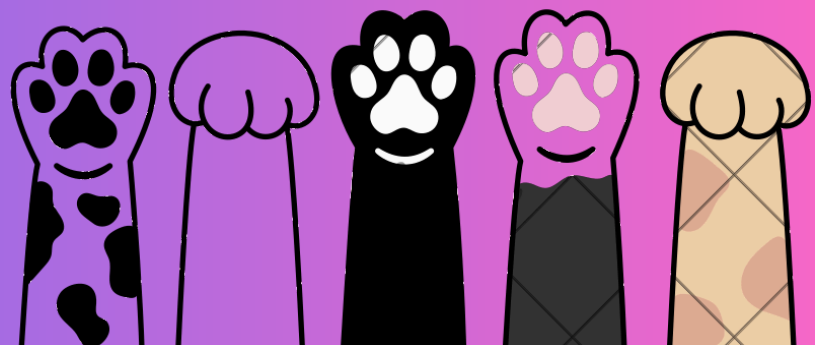




PET COMPANION TOOLKIT

A toolkit for Victims/Survivors

By Val Addams





Dogs have been part of human life for at least the past 10,000 years⁷. They are related to wolves, however, these domesticated animals provide companionship and bring so many benefits to our society. For victims/survivors, constant companionship of dogs will help with recovery and rebuilding your (and your loved ones') lives. This toolkit is tailored by the author and A/PI DVRP for you, your loved ones, and your community for educational purposes and as a handy resource for you and your companions to use during time of transition.

Advantages of Socializing With Dogs

Positive health benefits^{1, 8, 18, 24} dogs offer to humans, such as:

- Decrease levels of stress hormone
- Lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- Reduce loneliness
- Increase feelings of social support
- Improve mood
- Develop favorable behaviors
- Assist with managing health and mental health problems
- Help with trust and develop other positive outcomes in courtroom and group settings as well as counseling sessions

What Does It Mean to Get a Dog ??

Getting dogs will not only come with perks for owners and people around. As their companion, humans are responsible to provide humane living conditions for dogs that are beyond food, water, and place to live. Human companions also may want to get pet insurance and think about where the veterinarians to go for annual check up/vaccines/urgent & emergency situations, or even their grooming and training needs. In other situations (vacation, working, or hospitalization), thinking about who will take care of dogs beside yourself is also needed.

Work Dogs Offer to Humans

As a loyal companion to human, dog has filled in several roles^{2,3,6,19} as:

- **Service animal:** dogs that support owner with physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disabilities and trained to do specific duties for owner/handler
- **Emotional support animal:** dogs that acts as a companion for its handler and ease emotional and mental health symptoms
- **Working dog:** a purpose-trained canine that assists human companions with detection, herding, hunting, search & rescue, policing, military role, and more
- **Therapy dog:** "provide psychological and physiological therapy to individuals other than their handlers" and do not only work in one location
- **Facility dog:** a dog that is designated to work in a facility, receive specific training to do specific tasks, and paired with a handler. Usually you can see them in a hospital for kids



Resources for Dogs in the DMV Metropolitan Area

US Centers for Disease Control And Prevention (CDC)⁵ offers some tips on how to prepare in time of emergency for pets and human and other resources. Those tips are how to keep both owners and pets healthy during disaster by practicing good hygiene, keeping pets' preventive up to date, handling pets safely during high stress situations, supervising pets to avoid dangerous substances resulting in emergencies, and gathering pet first aid. Working with other stakeholders like animal shelters/rescue, government agencies, and other relief organizations are recommended.

Furthermore, here are some resources that offer free pet pantry, affordable/free dog clinic, or even ways to adopt and foster in the Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) Metropolitan Area:

- Human Rescue Alliance (HRA)²
- Brandywine Valley SPCA¹⁰
- Montgomery County Humane Society(MC Humane)¹¹
- Animal Welfare League of Arlington (AWLA)¹²
- Montgomery County Partners for Animal Wellbeing (MCPAW)¹³
- City Dogs and City Kitties Rescue¹⁴
- Lucky Dog Animal Rescue¹⁵
- Prince George's County Animal Service Division¹⁶
- Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC)²¹
- Rural Dog Rescue²²



Are You a Victim or Survivor of DV Who Own a Dog and Is Considering to Escape?

Unfortunately, in times of emergency such as domestic violence (DV), victims/survivors are not likely to leave or delay leaving, even returning to abusive situations because they could not bring dogs with them to stay in temporary shelters. Many housing organizations lack funding & capacity that offer programs for both survivors/victims & animals in need²⁰. Unless they are service animals, dogs, will not be allowed in many DV or women shelters in the DMV Metropolitan Area. This causes many animal shelters in the region to be overcrowded even more. However, there is Safe Havens For Pets⁴ that has partnered with several local organizations, such as AWLA, HRA, and Doorways¹⁷. Safe Havens For Pets provides a comprehensive directory of shelters that accept both owners and pets who are victims of DV. Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) also has a new initiative, PETS Project, to support survivors and pets in finding safe and stable housing²³.

If Not, Then What's Next?

Life is not always going to be a ray of happiness that is full of rainbows, flowers, and butterflies. In times of hardship, A/PI DVRP and the author encourage you to be proactive about your dogs, your own (and child) well-being by utilizing this toolkit. This toolkit hopefully will be an easy to use material for anyone. Sharing this toolkit with others via email or posting it on your social media or print this and leave it in your community's board is the bare minimum action you can take in preventing DV in our community!

Contact DVRP for More DV Resources

A/PI DVRP
Asian/Pacific Islanders Domestic Violence Resource Project

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