



Contact: Diversion Strategies Group, 602-372-7300

Animal Cruelty Diversion Program Overview:

There is a growing recognition of the relationship between animal abuse and other types of perpetrated violence or criminal behaviors. The Animal Cruelty Post-File Diversion Program will permit the Maricopa County Attorney's Office (MCAO) to respond more effectively to the needs of adult offenders who have been charged with abusing or neglecting an animal. There are several benefits to diverting this specific type of offender: prevents and corrects misbehavior, allows offenders to gain insight into the harm their behavior caused, reduces the offender's contact with the criminal justice system, increases connections to appropriate community-based systems of care, and holds the offender accountable for criminal conduct through their participation in an evidence-based, cognitive-behavioral program.

How the Animal Cruelty Diversion Program Works:

- Eligibility: will be determined by the Deputy County Attorney (DCA) for specific felony or misdemeanor offenses;
- The DCA is solely responsible for referring offenders to the Animal Cruelty Diversion Program. If eligible, the DCA suspends prosecution for two years;
- Referred offenders will be ¹assessed and receive clinical services, together with a cognitive-behavioral intervention. ²Animal and Society Institute (ASI) curriculum is the program that will be delivered to this population;
- Service delivery will be administered by SAGE Counseling Inc., a community-based behavioral health organization;
- If the offender successfully completes the Animal Cruelty Diversion Program, the DCA will file a motion to dismiss the charges with prejudice. If an offender fails to successfully complete these requirements, the DCA will file a motion to reinstate prosecution;
- This is an individualized treatment program; therefore, program length will vary; and
- Treatment services may be covered for AHCCCS verified members. SAGE Counseling will also assist in AHCCCS enrollment for those who may qualify, but not currently enrolled. A discount in fees may be available to those who qualify through a financial assessment process.

The Animal and Society Institute (ASI):

- Founded in 1983, its mission is to "expand knowledge of human-animal relationships."
- Created AniCare, the first published treatment model for people who abuse animals and has presented standards for approach to over 1100 practitioners in 24 states. The model also uses: The Identification, Assessment, and Treatment of Adults Who Abuse Animals by Kenneth Shapiro PhD and Antonia J.Z. Henderson PhD.
- Curriculum offers three levels of evidence-based intervention depending upon the severity of the offense:
 1. Level I: Companion Animal Responsibility and Care (CARE):
This is appropriate for offenders who just require basic education. The 4-hour education class covers minimal standards for care, knowledge of companion animals' basic needs, and interactive exercises to explore perspectives and to build empathy.

¹SAGE Counseling staff are trained and certified to utilize the ORAS (Ohio Risk Assessment System) Assessment Tool; specifically, the CST to identify criminogenic needs. ²SAGE Counseling staff are trained to facilitate the Animal and Society Institute Program.

2. Level II: Behavior, Accountability, Responsibility, and Knowledge (BARK):
Addressing accountability and factors that motivated the abuse or neglect, including attitudes, beliefs, and other risk factors. Offenders will attend 16, 2-hour open entry group sessions.
 3. Level III: AniCare:
One on one psychological therapy focusing on animal abuse and co-occurring issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse. Intervention focuses on accountability, empathy, perspective, compassion, interpersonal skills, and animal welfare. Levels II and III may be combined.
- Goals:
 1. Increase knowledge on the proper care of animals and the well-being of animals;
 2. Change attitudes and beliefs that support animal abuse; promote healthy and positive relationships with animals; and
 3. Reduce recidivism.

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