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**OCTEVAW supports the new *Network for Women with Pets Escaping Violence*  
“...what about my pet?”**

The Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) has been involved from the onset in the creation of this new network. The Canadian Federation of Human Societies (CFHS) initiated this pilot project to bring together diverse organizations such as VAW agencies, veterinarians, police and by-law to address the problems faced by women when trying to flee abuse with pets.

The link between pet abuse and woman abuse is frequently used in the violence against women community when assessing risk factors. This is due to the fact that some abusers use animals as pawns and/or abuse them to hurt and control their partners. In short, the bond created between a pet and a woman can act as a barrier to her seeking help from violence.

Canadian research indicates that roughly 1/4 women experiencing domestic violence will delay their escape if it means leaving their pets behind (McIntosh, 2001). Most women's shelters do not accept animals for good reason. However the reality is that many pets are left in violent homes or end up at human societies where they are frequently euthanized. This potential result is devastating to many women who choose to live with abuse rather than lose their pet. Few resources are available in the community to offer practical solutions to this problem.

The goals of this network are to strengthen cross-service communication, cross-training and cross-reporting of both woman abuse and pet abuse. In addition, researching and assessing the current strategies being used to help women with pets is important to track the extent of this issue and to develop a program to house and care for animals while their owners transition out of abuse. Our hope is that the public starts seeing animal abuse as a risk factor for women and children, and by doing so, help to prevent and reduce violence in our community.

OCTEVAW is a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to ending violence against women and, through leadership, education, advocacy and political action, to promoting a coordinated response to women and their children who have experienced abuse.

For more information about OCTEVAW and our involvement in this network, please contact:

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