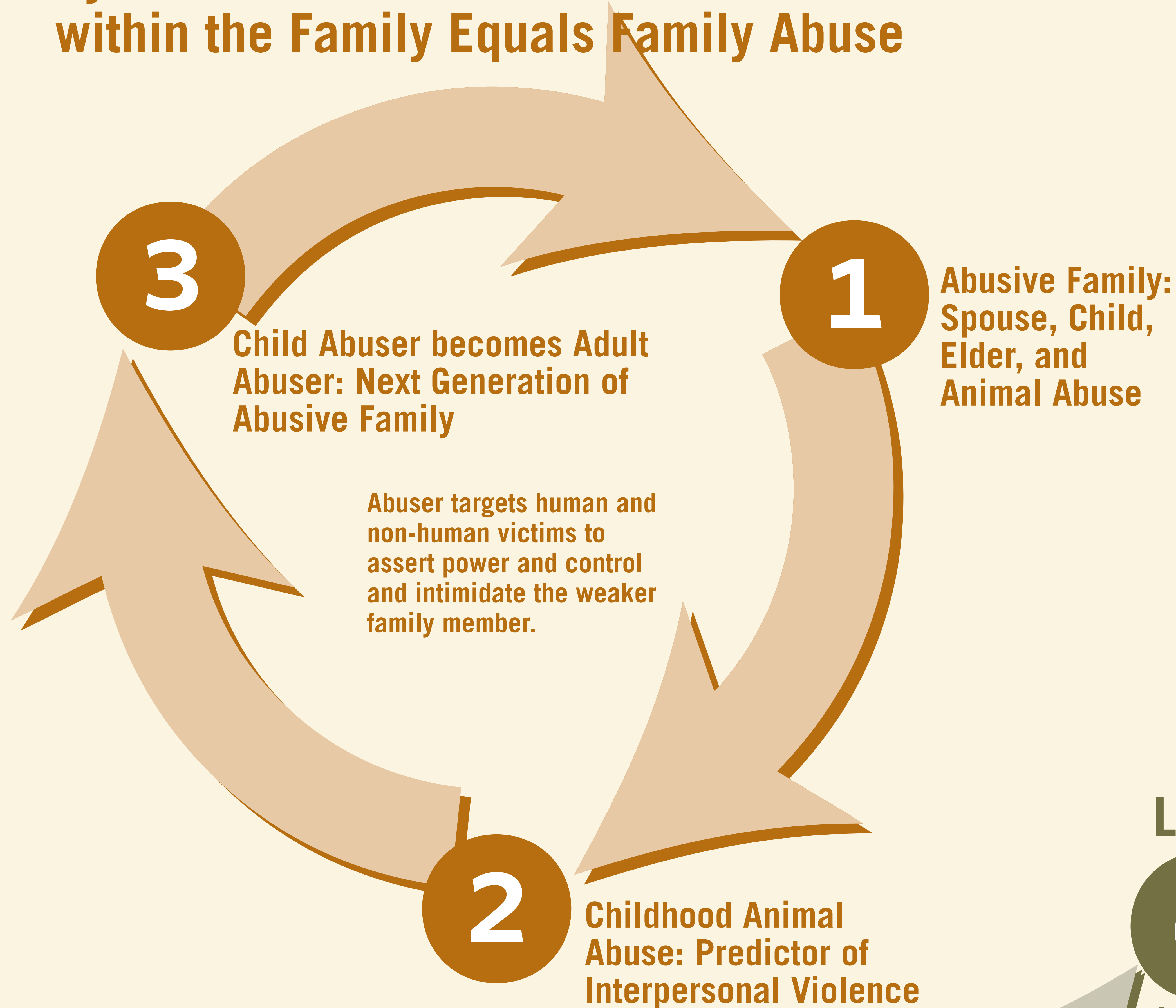


# The Link: The Relationship Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence

Joan Schaffner\*

Associate Professor of Law, George Washington University Law School

## Cycle of Violence and the “Link” within the Family Equals Family Abuse



## The Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence in the Family Creates Problems for Victims

Animal abuse often comprises multiple abuses—abuser harms the family pet intending to intimidate and/or emotionally harm human family member.

Animal abuse is often used to silence human victim from reporting own abuse.

Animal abuse causes victims to delay or even prevents them from escaping the abusive home.

## The Law Must Target the Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence in the Family

**The law can capitalize upon the Link at every stage in the cycle of violence:**  
From before abuse begins through sanction and rehabilitation after the abuser is found guilty.

### The result:

A cycle of laws targeting the Link and addressing the cycle of violence.

## Cycle of Laws: To Target the Link and Combat Family Abuse



**1** Studies have proven animal abuse is both a PREDICTOR and CO-INDICATOR of domestic violence by demonstrating that in homes where there is DV there is a higher incidence of animal abuse. The abuse is FAMILY abuse and all members are affected—physically and emotionally.

**2** Children exposed to family violence are at risk of suffering from emotional and behavioral problems, very often engaging in animal abuse themselves. In turn, childhood animal abuse is linked to aggressive behavior and violent criminal activity as an adult.

**3** A child from an abusive family is more likely to become an adult abuser and create a new abusive family.

**4** AVOID all abuse by teaching compassion and respect for all living creatures to young students.

**5** AVOID human abuse by enacting effective animal cruelty laws, prosecuting aggressively, and imposing serious sanctions.

**6** DETECT family abuse early by:

- Separating data on animal cruelty in FBI UCR program.
- Reporting child and animal abuse by physicians, humane law enforcement, and veterinarians.
- Cross-reporting abuses among child protective services, adult protective services, and humane law enforcement.

**7** IMPROVE protection for all family abuse victims by:

- Identifying needs of all victims—is there a pet who needs protection?
- Authorizing issuance of intrafamily abuse protective order upon showing of good cause to believe that the alleged abuser has committed, or is threatening to commit, animal cruelty against the pet with the EFFECT of emotionally or physically injuring a human family member.
- Providing for “the care, custody, or control of the pet” in a protective order.
- Establishing safe havens for human and non-human victims.

**8** ENHANCE prosecution of abuser by prosecuting for all abuses and allowing introduction of evidence of pet abuse in cases of human abuse.

**9** AVOID future abuse by:

- Imposing appropriate sentence for animal abuse reflecting significance of crime.
- Mandating counseling in animal cruelty prevention programs (AniCare).
- Forbidding ownership of animals thus removing tool from abuser’s arsenal.
- Allowing evidence of animal abuse in related child custody and visitation proceedings.

\* This work was presented at the Oxford Animal Ethics Conference on the Relationship Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence on September 18, 2007, at Keble College, Oxford, England.