**PETS IN SHELTER POLICY**

Policy Statement:

At [Agency], we are committed to providing comprehensive support and safety to survivors of domestic violence, and recognize that their pets are often an integral part of their lives. This policy outlines the procedures and guidelines for intake and accommodation of survivors with pets at our shelter.

The objective of this policy is to create a safe and supportive environment for both survivors and their pets, ensuring that no survivor is forced to choose between their safety and the well-being of their companion animals. This policy applies to all staff members, volunteers, and residents of the shelter.

Pet-Friendly Shelter:

[Agency] is a pet-friendly shelter and welcomes survivors with pets.

Service animals, defined by the *BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act* (2015), are always allowed.

Staff will notify all residents of the agency’s pet friendly status before intake.

Intake Procedure:

During the intake process, staff members will ask survivors if they have pets and provide information about our pet accommodation options.

Survivors will be invited to bring their pets with them to the shelter if space is available and it is safe to do so.

Pets will be kept in [describe area] during the intake process, in order to adjust to the environment and decompress.

Eligibility:

Survivors with pets are eligible for shelter intake, on the condition that the pet is not aggressive, and has no history of causing harm to humans or other animals.

Any history of aggression should be identified by shelter staff in the pre-screening to determine if an appropriate safety plan can be set in place, or if an alternative pet sheltering option is more appropriate.

Pet Accommodation:

[Agency] will make every effort to accommodate survivors and their pets in designated pet-friendly living spaces. If a survivor's pet is not compatible with the shelter environment or poses a safety risk to others, alternative arrangements will be explored, such as referrals to local animal shelters or rescue organizations.

Safety and Hygiene:

All pets residing in the shelter should be up-to-date on vaccinations, and must be free of fleas/ticks/parasites.

Pet owner/guardians are responsible for the care and hygiene of their pets, including providing food, water, and regular exercise.

Staff will conduct periodic inspections of pet living areas to ensure cleanliness and adherence to shelter rules.

Pets must be leashed or in a carrier when outside of the resident’s room.

Confidentiality:

Information about survivors' pets, including their presence at the shelter, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, consistent with our policy on survivor confidentiality.

Resources:

[Agency] will maintain a list of local resources, including veterinarians, pet food banks, and grooming services, to assist survivors in meeting their pets' needs.

Education and Awareness:

[Agency] is committed to fostering a culture of learning and continuous improvement among staff. We encourage all staff members to take advantage of training resources to enhance their skills and knowledge, ultimately benefiting the pets and their owners/guardians in our care.

Educational materials on the link between domestic violence and pet abuse will be available to survivors and staff.

Reevaluation of Suitability:

If the pet’s behaviour disrupts the shelter environment to the extent that it compromises safety or well-being, the survivor will be required to find alternate housing for the pet with staff assistance, and/or leave the shelter.

[Agency] is dedicated to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all survivors. This policy ensures that survivors with pets have access to our services while maintaining the safety and well-being of all residents.