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Cross-reporting of Interpersonal Violence and Animal Cruelty: The Charlotte Project

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The overlapping nature of interpersonal violence and animal cruelty is well established, however historically each issue has been addressed by distinct and separate protective systems. An innovative community-based project is described that utilized cross-training as a mechanism to foster collaboration between human services and animal control agencies. Findings are useful for professionals and community stakeholders interested in facilitating the cross-reporting of interpersonal violence and animal cruelty.

Key words: interpersonal violence, animal cruelty, reporting, cross-reporting, system collaboration

Both interpersonal violence and animal cruelty are serious social problems that result in untold costs in terms of human and animal suffering. Although troubling links have emerged between interpersonal violence and animal cruelty, the protective systems designed to respond to these issues have evolved into distinct and specialized systems that often operate with limited consideration of one another. At best, lack of knowledge and coordination between systems restricts the possibilities for creative and effective collaborations and, at worst, increases the risk for harm in situations where both human and animal abuse are occurring simultaneously. This article examines a community-based project designed to foster collaboration between a human service agency and an animal control organization to educate professionals and examine best practices for the cross-reporting of animal cruelty and interpersonal violence.

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Social workers have an important facilitative role in bridging service delivery systems. One of the unique and defining features of social work involves a longstanding commitment to community-level action, intervention, and change. Social workers identify ways to partner with consumers of services, professionals, groups, and organizations to champion rights, opportunities, and the well-being of underserved and at-risk population groups. In addition to direct service with individuals and families, social workers act to improve communities and enhance inter-organizational, group, and institutional relationships. In everyday practice, "the practitioner must document the nature and extent of a problem, describe and measure its impact on people's lives, and help find solutions" (Perlman & Gurin, 1972, p. 13).

As noted by Toseland and Rivas, a component in community practice involves capacity building, defined as "helping community groups [and organizations] develop the ability and resources to successfully tackle one issue or a set of issues" (2008, p. 54). Capacity building is predicated upon social workers playing "the role of coordinator in helping members gather data and build resources ... [and] facilitate exchanges of information among members about the issues facing the group and about ways to accomplish particular objectives" (p. 54). When engaged in community capacity building, the social worker assists consumers of services and professionals with coordination and integration of communication and interaction across organizations and interests groups to build infrastructure and facilitate change (e.g., conduct research, promotion of rights, safety, and protection). Inter-organizational collaboration and capacity building often center on bringing people together on the basis of common interests and values about a problem, situation, or occurrence with recognition that contingent upon "a group's interests and its ideology, the same condition can be considered perfectly satisfactory or a burning injustice" (Perlman & Gurin, 1972, p. 13).

Here, community practice is examined in the context of a workshop designed for employees at a department of human services and an animal care and control agency to examine the merits of and processes for the effective cross-reporting of animal cruelty and interpersonal violence by professionals. The

overriding theme for this demonstration project involved the desire to bring frontline social workers and animal control officers together to examine best practices for protecting animals and humans against violence.

Violence in the Context of the Family

Zilney and Zilney (2005) provide an important historical backdrop for describing the evolution and independent nature of service delivery for and organizational response to interpersonal violence and animal cruelty in North America. In recent years, literature has described and documented an association between interpersonal violence and animal cruelty, yielding support to the premise that animal cruelty often occurs in the context of domestic violence (Arkow, 1998, 2007; Ascione, 1998, 2005; Becker & French, 2004; DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Flynn, 2000; Jorgenson & Maloney, 1999; Merz-Perez & Heide, 2004; Quinlisk, 1999; Randour & Davidson, 2008; Trollinger, 2001). Yet, in communities across America, many protective service agencies and animal care organizations continue to function in a segregated fashion, conceptualizing identification of and intervention with animal cruelty and interpersonal violence as separate, unrelated occurrences that affect specific populations (e.g., children, women, and animals). For example, Risley-Curtiss, Zilney, & Hornung indicate that only "Slightly more than a quarter of the states (12 of 46) provide training for CPS [child protective service] staff to inquire about whether families have animals ... a little more than 17% (8 of 46) include information about recognizing and assessing animal abuse" (2010, p. 75). Unfortunately, silo approaches often fail to recognize animal abuse as a component "of the continuum of abuse in a family" and can undermine inter-organizational information sharing and coordination of services (Becker & French, 2004, p. 401).

"The Latham Foundation, the AHA [American Humane Association], and the Humane Society (HS) of the United States are three organizations that have long promoted interdisciplinary collaboration between animal welfare, child welfare, and DV [domestic violence] professionals," according to Risley-Curtiss, Zilney, and Hornung (2010, p. 71). In recent years, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has

taken an instrumental role in promoting “a view of family and interpersonal violence that transcends categories (e.g. animal cruelty, partner abuse, child abuse) broadening interpersonal to include other species as well as family to include non-humans [animals]” (Long, Long, & Kulkarni, 2007, p. 150). Beyond community-based educational efforts to raise public and professional awareness, the HSUS has also advocated for cross-sector reporting, where professionals “report and establish appropriate recording mechanisms between service delivery systems to protect children, adults, and animals from violent acts” (Long et al., 2007, p. 152). When communities establish the capacity to cross-sector report animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, vulnerable populations and professionals stand to benefit from a

richer understanding of the conditions and dynamics surrounding and underlying family violence and patterns of interpersonal violence. ... Access to current, pertinent, and valid data on which to act is essential for effective prevention and intervention services. With respect to violent acts, timely knowledge of actions and behaviors can help shape intervention strategies and influence professional decision making concerning the safety and security of consumers, as well as providers of services. (Long et al., 2007, p. 153)

Review of Literature

In recent years, given a growing body of research describing a link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, advocacy for cross-reporting initiatives between social service and animal protection organizations as well as cross-reporting legislation have become prevalent and have emerged from a variety of sources (e.g., DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Long et al., 2007; Silk, 2007; Taylor & Signal, 2006). For example, Randour (2007) suggests a need for professional standards in the helping professions to facilitate the education and training of mental health professionals concerning the link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence as components for use in assessment and intervention. Silk cautions, “professionals need to be aware and take a balanced approach in order not

to jump to conclusions, but they must take seriously the idea of connections [between animal abuse and domestic violence]" (2007, p. 712). Not surprisingly, Taylor and Signal's analysis of adults in Queensland "showed that those who were not aware of the link and did not know to whom to report such abuse demonstrated the lowest overall propensity to report [animal abuse]" (2006, p. 207). Disappointingly, Risley-Curtiss, Zilney, & Hornung indicate that "Of states, 26% (12 of 46) reported that some cross-reporting occurs, 6.5% (3 of 46) states reported having some sort of policy in place, and 11% (6 of 46) include information on cross-reporting in training" (2010, p. 76). Hence, professional ignorance stands as a critical initial barrier to cross-reporting efforts.

Zilney and Zilney (2005) describe a cross-sector reporting initiative between Family and Children Services of Guelph and Wellington County (FSGWC) and the Guelph Humane Society (GHS) conducted from February of 2001 through January 2002 in Ontario, Canada. They report that via "an internal training program, researchers educated investigators from both agencies about the other agency's mandates and procedures, and issues relating to the link between cruelty to animals and humans" (p. 54). Additionally, "researchers developed an initial intake checklist form to simplify the gathering of information and remind investigators to seek data through direct questioning of their clients relevant to the completion of the form" (p. 53).

Zilney and Zilney (2005) further describe a number of results and observations concerning their research on the cross-reporting activities initiative. They note that collaboration and the partnership between the two agencies appeared to enhance communication among workers, foster informal consultation, and assist in the development of innovative interventions to assist workers in combating bureaucratic restraints at FSGWC and GHS (p. 60). Subsequent to the cross-reporting training and effort, both the FSGWC and GHS "added training regarding the relationship between animal and human cruelty to their internal orientation series, and they required all new staff to participate" and the authors conclude "the project would not have been possible without the commitment of senior management personnel from both agencies"(p. 61).

Indeed, Zilney and Zilney's cross-reporting project served as an impetus for a recent demonstration experience in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Charlotte Project

In 2007, HSUS conducted a community workshop in Charlotte, North Carolina as a part of its *First Strike® Campaign* to educate law officials, helping professionals, and the general public about the connection between cruelty to animals and violence toward people. The *First Strike® Campaign* workshop garnered interest from Mecklenburg County officials and professors at UNC Charlotte and served as a foundation piece for Charlotte becoming a demonstration community for the cross-reporting of interpersonal violence and animal cruelty.

Planning for The Charlotte Project was obtained from leadership (e.g., director positions) in key community agencies as well as educators (staff and professors) at UNC Charlotte. Concerning the two primary community stakeholders, the Division Director of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control (CMACC) possessed administrative authority over operations for animal care and control and for 78 employees including 39 animal control and enforcement officers. Similarly, the Deputy Division Director of Youth and Family Services Division at Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (YFSDMCDSS) held administrative responsibilities for mandated protective services for children and families and 140 social workers in a county organization of nearly 1300 employees. Both agency directors were committed to the professional education of their professional staff as well as the aforementioned project goals.

In September 2008, supported through funding from The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS); professors and staff from The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte), the Deputy Division Director of Youth and Family Services Division at Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, the Division Director of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control, and the Director of the Women's Commission Division for Mecklenburg County Community Support Services initiated The Charlotte Project and began formal meetings with goals to:

- 1) Educate child protective and animal care professionals about the relevance of reporting animal cruelty and interpersonal violence to appropriate authorities and the connection between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence.
- 2) Examine best practices in reporting interpersonal violence and animal cruelty in everyday practice.
- 3) Foster collaboration and organizational relationships between community-based organizations (e.g., UNC Charlotte Department of Social Work, Animal Control Division—Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department, Child Protective Services of Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, and Mecklenburg County Community Support Services) to further protect family members and animals in abusive households.
- 4) Identify new and creative ways to enhance effective cross-reporting of interpersonal violence and animal cruelty.

Early in the life of The Charlotte Project, and as a result of funding from HSUS, project members were able to utilize the expertise of Mary Zilney, MSW, and benefit from Zilney and Zilney's (2005) cross-reporting effort in Ontario, Canada. Mary Zilney's expertise was used to create a unique one-day workshop at UNC Charlotte to examine and advance cross-reporting between animal cruelty and care officers from CMACC and social workers from YFSDMCDSS. After considerable discussion between project members and Mary Zilney, common and breakout sessions were designed. A full-day workshop was offered on both March 12th (2009) and March 13th (2009) to accommodate work schedules and to avoid depletion of professionals from important, core organizational activities and responsibilities on any single day. The workshop was video recorded by the instructional technologist in the College of Health and Human Services at UNC Charlotte to produce an edited DVD of the cross-reporting workshop for use as a demonstration project for consideration in other communities.

The workshop structure was designed to review core

content, provide an organizational overview of both systems, introduce new cross-reporting protocols for each organization, and spend time brainstorming implementation and next step issues. Ultimately, the workshop and The Charlotte Project concluded with leadership and agency representatives agreeing to the following: promote the use of published (toll-free) phone numbers to cross-report; examine how assessment items could be incorporated into investigative processes; explore further the feasibility of entering data in a common software package that would route information to appropriate supervisors; and use the DVD of the workshop to bolster on-going training for professionals on the importance of the cross-reporting animal cruelty and interpersonal violence.

Methods

As these interventions are not well-studied, researchers were interested in feedback from the workshop to evaluate the thoughts and perceptions of participants. Such information can strengthen future development and replication of similar programs. A cross-sectional survey design was used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data from participants at the conclusion of each full-day workshop. The study was approved by the University Institutional Review Board before data collection.

Measures

Scaled survey items were created to assess understanding, perceived skills, and motivation to change of workshop participants. Using a five point scale (low = 1, medium = 3, and high = 5), participants rated their "understanding of the connections between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence" before this training. A subsequent item, using the same content and scaling, prompted a rating for this understanding substituting "after this training" in place of "before this training." Similarly, participants rated their knowledge concerning both animal and human protection systems, ability to identify situations that require referral to another protection system, personal commitment to address animal/interpersonal violence issues within your own delivery system, and belief in the ability to effectively report interpersonal violence and animal

cruelty across protection systems.

In addition, open-ended items were utilized to capture information about perceived benefits and challenges regarding cross-reporting efforts and preferences about the project's next steps. Hence, participants were asked to provide feedback with regard to: "What are the potential benefits of this cross-reporting effort?" "What are the potential challenges to this effort" and "What would you like to see as next steps?"

Findings

Sample Description

Of the 123 attendees in the March (2009) workshops, 77% (n = 95) identified themselves as department of social services employees and 23% (n = 28) were animal cruelty unit employees. With regard to gender and ethnicity, 72% (n = 89) were female and 64% (n = 79) identified themselves as African American, Asian American, or Hispanic, with the majority of participants identifying themselves as African American (55%, n = 68). The mean age of the sample was 36, with only 21% (n = 26) holding a supervisory position.

Quantitative Results

Table 1 describes sample sizes, means, and standard deviations for each of the quantitative items for all participants and by employer, department of social services or animal cruelty and care. For most items, little variation can be found when comparing total sample means with means derived from the two subsamples. Pre-workshop ratings of knowledge were moderate, ranging between 2.60 and 3.39. Child protective and animal care workers gave similar ratings in regard to their pre-workshop knowledge with the exception of 'understanding the connections between animal care and interpersonal violence.' Interestingly, animal care workers (3.39) rated themselves as having more knowledge on this item than child protective workers (2.68). Pre-workshop ratings for motivation and perceived efficacy were 2.93 and 2.88 respectively. Again, animal care workers expressed a slightly higher degree of perceived efficacy (3.18 as compared to 2.80) with regard to reporting across systems. Both groups reported fairly high levels

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Item	Population	N	Mean	S. D.	
Understands connections between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence	All	123	2.85	1.15	
	rate yourself <i>before workshop</i> .	DSS Workers	95	2.68	1.07
		Animal Care	28	3.39	1.26
	rate yourself <i>after workshop</i> .	All	123	4.28	.68
		DSS Workers	95	4.28	.68
		Animal Care	28	4.29	.71
Knowledge of both animal and human protection systems	All	121	2.89	1.11	
	rate yourself <i>before workshop</i> .	DSS Workers	95	2.89	1.13
		Animal Care	26	2.88	1.03
	rate yourself <i>after workshop</i> .	All	121	4.24	.72
		DSS Workers	95	4.29	.62
		Animal Care	26	4.04	1.00
Ability to identify situations that require referral to another protective system	All	122	2.60	1.17	
	rate yourself <i>before workshop</i> .	DSS Workers	94	2.56	1.19
		Animal Care	28	2.71	1.12
	rate yourself <i>after workshop</i> .	All	122	4.16	.70
		DSS Workers	94	4.15	.72
		Animal Care	28	4.21	.63
Personal commitment to address animal/interpersonal violence issues within your delivery system	All	122	2.93	1.24	
	rate yourself <i>before workshop</i> .	DSS Workers	94	2.84	1.26
		Animal Care	28	3.25	1.14
	rate yourself <i>after workshop</i> .	All	122	4.18	.85
		DSS Workers	94	4.14	.89
		Animal Care	28	4.32	.72
Your belief in the ability to effectively report interpersonal violence and animal cruelty across protection systems	All	121	2.88	1.23	
	rate yourself <i>before workshop</i> .	DSS Workers	93	2.80	1.26
		Animal Care	28	3.18	1.09
	rate yourself <i>after workshop</i> .	All	122	4.12	.88
		DSS Workers	94	4.12	.87
		Animal Care	28	4.14	.93

of knowledge, motivation, and perceived efficacy following the workshop. Knowledge ratings ranged from 4.28 to 4.12, while motivation was rated at 4.18 and perceived efficacy at 4.12.

It should also be noted that given the interest in gender and racial or ethnic attitudinal differences concerning animals (e.g., Risley-Curtiss, Holley, & Wolf, 2006), a preliminary examination of the overall sample did not provide statistically significant differences ($p \leq .05$, 2-sided chi square tests) for pre-workshop ratings for the five quantitative items on the basis of gender or ethnicity. Similarly, when examining department of social service workers and animal control and care officers as distinct subgroups, differences on pre-workshop ratings on the five quantitative items were also generally insignificant. The two exceptions involved: (1) gender with animal control and care officers, where male respondents indicated a lower pre-workshop understanding (2-sided chi square test, $p = .03$) of the connections between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence than their female counterpart officers; and (2) ethnicity with animal control and care officers, where African American, European American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American respondents differed (2-sided chi square test, $p = .036$) in their pre-workshop ability to identify situations that require referral to another protective system. Unfortunately, with a relatively small overall sample size, sorting data quickly reduced subsample sizes and limited the meaningful application of additional statistical analyses.

Table 2 summarizes results from nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests for paired items examining respondents' post-workshop perceptions of their knowledge and beliefs before and after the workshop experience. With respect to all quantitative items, differences of mean ranks on two tailed tests were significant ($p < .01$) and in the direction suggesting that workshop participants benefited in each of the areas: understanding of the connections between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence; knowledge concerning both animal and human protection systems; ability to identify situations that require referral to another protection system; personal commitment to address animal/interpersonal violence issues within your own delivery system; and belief in the ability to effectively report interpersonal violence and animal cruelty

Table 2. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test*

Variable	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Significance
Understands connections between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence.					
<i>after-before</i>				-8.453	.00
Neg. Ranks	0	0	0		
Pos. Ranks	92	46.50	4278		
Ties	31				
Total	123				
Knowledge of both animal and human protection systems.					
<i>after-before</i>				-8.291	.00
Neg. Ranks	0	0	0		
Pos. Ranks	88	44.50	3916		
Ties	33				
Total	121				
Ability to identify situations that require referral to another protective system.					
<i>after-before</i>				-8.673	.00
Neg. Ranks	0	0	0		
Pos. Ranks	97	49.00	4753		
Ties	25				
Total	122				
Personal commitment to address animal/interpersonal violence issues within your delivery system.					
<i>after-before</i>				-7.939	.00
Neg. Ranks	0	0	0		
Pos. Ranks	81	41.00	3321		
Ties	41				
Total	122				
Your belief in the ability to effectively report interpersonal violence and animal cruelty across protection systems.					
<i>after-before</i>				-7.715	.00
Neg. Ranks	1	47	47		
Pos. Ranks	80	40.93	3274		
Ties	40				
Total	121				

* When data were sorted by employment, Department of Social Services and Animal Care and Cruelty Unit, after and before differences on Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests on items remain significant for both subpopulations.

across protection systems. Z scores for the ability to identify situations that require referral to another protection system, understanding of the connections between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, and knowledge concerning both animal and human protection systems were the highest.

Open Ended Themes

A thematic content analysis was performed on the responses that were provided from 5 open-ended questions at the end of the evaluation survey. Table 3 summarizes themes and provides frequencies. Concerning potential benefits of the cross-reporting event, participants suggested that access to information could help more families and animals ($n = 47$), holding promise for quicker response times and increasing the capability of professionals to better protect both people and animals and reduce maltreatment through early intervention. One animal cruelty and care officer noted, "This effort will help both agencies attempt to help [as] many people/animals that may have not previously been helped." Cross-reporting was also perceived to hold merit for increasing awareness of issues and services ($n = 32$) as well as for understanding how systems can work together ($n = 23$).

With respect to potential challenges associated with the cross-reporting effort, problems of coordination ($n = 37$), often involving poor communication and/or confusion about what to report, and to whom, were cited. Coordination could also relate to lack of trust between two agencies. An increase in bureaucracy (e.g., workload, paperwork and forms) was also cited ($n = 23$). Challenges in working with families (e.g., maintaining confidentiality, encountering client hostility, and lack of client cooperation) was identified as a challenge ($n = 13$) as well as a potential lack of participation, "keeping systems going," and not making reports ($n = 9$).

With regard to the future, participants identified two primary ways to improve cross-reporting efforts via increasing communication and cooperation between agencies ($n = 34$ and additional training ($n = 30$). Identified next steps include: continued coordination of efforts/trainings ($n = 20$); progress monitoring (e.g., problem solving and evaluating efforts) ($n = 8$); and continued implementation ($n = 2$). One participant

Table 3. Thematic Content Analysis for Open Ended Questions

Themes (frequency)	Description/Examples
<i>Potential Benefit Themes</i>	
Helping more families and animals (47)	Better outcomes for animals and children; easier to provide services; serve entire family because 'pets' are part of family.
Increased awareness of issues/services (32)	Understand connections and overlap between types of violence.
Working together (23)	Understand how other systems work and how systems can work together.
<i>Potential Challenges Themes</i>	
Problems in coordination (37)	Information not getting to the correct place; confusion about what to report and to whom, failure to report; poor communication; lack of trust between two agencies.
Increased bureaucracy (23)	Additional work, forms, paperwork.
Challenges working with families (13)	Maintaining confidentiality, encountering client hostility, lack of client cooperation.
Lack of participation (9)	Workers and agencies not making reports.
<i>Improve Efforts</i>	
Increase communication/cooperation between agencies (34)	Fully implement policy, co-locate some staff; share more information
Additional training (30)	Have more meetings, planning, resources.
<i>Next Steps</i>	
Continued coordination efforts/training (20)	More training; follow-through.
Progress monitoring (8)	Problem solving, evaluation efforts.
Continued implementation (2)	Change reporting processes.

advanced "tours, discussions, shadowing of both workers from each agency" as viable options. The formation of small groups for implementation of cross-reporting was a specific suggestion.

Discussion and Conclusion

One goal of The Charlotte Project was to educate both social workers and animal care professionals about the

relevance of reporting animal cruelty and interpersonal violence to appropriate authorities and to educate about the connection between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence. Feedback from participants confirmed that social workers and animal care professionals benefited from the workshop experience in a number of ways (e.g., understanding of the connections between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, knowledge concerning both animal and human protection systems, ability to identify situations that require referral to another protection system, personal commitment to address animal/interpersonal violence issues within your own delivery system, and belief in the ability to effectively report interpersonal violence and animal cruelty across protection systems).

A second goal of The Charlotte Project involved examining best practices in reporting interpersonal violence and animal cruelty in everyday practice. Although not explicitly evaluated in the post-workshop questionnaire, the workshop design was structured in a manner where animal care and control officers described current and best practices in reporting animal cruelty to social workers. Similarly, a social work supervisor described to animal care and control officers best practices for reporting interpersonal violence to social workers. Concurrent and common sessions afforded participants opportunities to question and discuss various practices, processes, and procedures for reporting.

Concerning the third goal of The Charlotte Project, to foster collaboration and organizational relationships between community-based organizations to facilitate to further protect family members and animals in abusive households, qualitative feedback indicated that participants noted the relevance of collaboration. More specifically, collaboration was viewed as instrumental for facilitating timeliness in reporting animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, as well as the ability to reach individuals and families that otherwise might not have been helped. It is important to note that at the conclusion of the workshop participants agreed to continue to use published phone numbers to report interpersonal violence and animal cruelty across agencies. Qualitative feedback suggested maintaining confidentiality, bureaucracy, paperwork, workload, having enough time, commitment of staff, and "keeping

systems going" as potential barriers for collaboration.

With respect to The Charlotte Project's fourth goal involving new and creative ways to enhance effective cross-reporting of interpersonal violence and animal cruelty, workshop participants were encouraged to consider adoption of a common software for reporting animal cruelty and interpersonal violence between departments of social services and animal care and control. Supervisors could be trained for daily use of the software. Professionals from both organizations could provide a supervisor with pertinent information for entry, documentation, and consideration for investigation. Although novel and creative, this particular phase was not implemented. Indeed, as suggested by qualitative data describing important next steps for cross-reporting, had The Charlotte Project been able to implement additional contact, trainings, and meetings and form on-going work groups (e.g., between YFSDMCDSS and CMAACC), technological innovation through the use of common software might have been viable. Unfortunately, from the researchers' perspective with The Charlotte Project, changes in agency personnel, competing time commitments, organizational changes, as well as a lack of a progress monitoring plan can serve to undermine a sustained effort to adopt and use shared software for cross-reporting.

Finally, consistent with Zilney and Zilney's (2005) findings, devotion of leaders in the two primary organizations (YFSDMCDSS and CMAACC) was an important factor in the development of The Charlotte Project. At one point, as a result of reorganization efforts at one of the sponsoring organizations, The Charlotte Project was confronted with the possibility of appreciable delay. Leadership's shared interest in the protection of people and animals and dedication to cross-reporting constituted a key ingredient in sustaining efforts and avoiding a setback for implementing the workshop.

Though clearly there are barriers to implementing and maintaining organizational changes that support cross-reporting efforts, the experience of the Charlotte Project shows that educational efforts can help to raise the issue for key constituencies, increase cross-systems knowledge, and promote individual working relationships across systems. Workshop

participants emerged with an increased appreciation and understanding of each others' work, while administrators gained the experience of working together productively to develop and sponsor the workshop. These successful outcomes have prepared a stronger foundation for building on-going collaborations towards creating enduring system changes for cross-reporting efforts in our community.

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