



A Path to Safety

Helping people and pets escape violence in Ontario.



SafePet
ONTARIO



“I’m going to a shelter tomorrow and I have nowhere for my dogs to go. They are the reason I get up each day. To love, feed, walk, and care for. We are hanging in one day at a time. Please help.”

- SafePet Client Request

Safe Pets mean Safe Families.

The decision to leave or to stay in an abusive home is complicated and fraught with fear. But for 47% of survivors, the decision to leave comes down to one important factor: their pet. **Nearly half of abuse victims will delay leaving their abuser, or will not leave at all, if they cannot take their pet with them to safety.**

Most human shelters in Ontario do not accept pets. Tragically, this significant gap in service means that 60% of those escaping an abusive partner are forced to leave their pet behind with their abuser, and 1/3 of those survivors will consider returning to their abuser to protect their pet. This puts clients, pets, children, and confidentially-located Violence Against Women shelters at serious risk of harm.

This is where SafePet Ontario comes in. We bridge this dangerous gap in the gender-based violence sector by providing pet-safekeeping for survivors of family violence and human trafficking for up to one year. We do this through a network of pet foster families, veterinarians, frontline service workers, and law enforcements across the province. Our innovative pet-safekeeping program ensures that vulnerable adult and child victims can escape their abuser sooner. Safe pets mean safe families. It's that simple.

But we need philanthropic support to keep saving lives.

Our services to those escaping violence and abuse are free of charge to all clients. We cover veterinary costs and also ensure that our confidential pet foster families incur limited costs for their pet's care. Our Placement Coordinator provides regular updates to owners, and when pets return to home we send food, toys, bedding, and leashes/harnesses as a "welcome home" package.

Our clients are primarily those who identify as women, but we accept anyone in Ontario who is a survivor of family violence or sex trafficking—regardless of age, gender, or sexual identity.

Through thoughtful investment from donors and sponsoring partners, SafePet Ontario can provide increased and enhanced programs and services that will help survivors and their beloved pets transition from fear and violence to freedom, stability, and long-term safety. With over 35 requests each month for our services (and growing), **the need for SafePet Ontario has never been greater.**



60%

of survivors of Intimate Partner Violence are forced to leave their pet behind with their abuser.

1/3

of those who have escaped an abusive home considered returning to their abuser to protect their pet.

We help survivors find safety by helping their pets find safety too.

Initially established in 2017, SafePet Ontario became a registered charity in January 2022. To-date, **we have supported over 450 clients and their pets escape** dangerous and harmful situations through our services.

Our mission is rooted in academic research. Data shows that intimate partner violence, child abuse, animal abuse, and elder abuse tend to co-occur in families. Abusers inflict violence on family pets as a way of punishing, controlling, and coercing their human victims. This causes intergenerational trauma: children see or hear their pet being abused, and the cycle of violence often continues as those children come of age.

SafePet Ontario doesn't work alone to address these issues. Our organization works collaboratively with a network of organizations and care providers across the province to ensure comprehensive support to survivors, including:

- Police Services (OPP and local law enforcement)
- Violence Against Women Shelters
- Regional Victim Services
- Veterinarians and RVTs
- Animal Shelters and Municipal Animal Services
- Indigenous and Culturally-Specific Community Services
- And other frontline workers

Even with this network of partners, **the urgent truth is that the current need for our services is beyond what we can currently address.**

The number of victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking in Canada is increasing year over year, and the pandemic and inflationary crisis have only made these numbers escalate. Consequently, SafePet Ontario is seeing an unprecedented number of applications for our services.

To help children and adults find safety sooner, all vulnerable members of a family system—including pets—must be given the opportunity to escape. Victims should never have to choose between leaving violence or leaving their pet(s).

Will you help?

“When animals are abused, people are at risk.
When people are abused, animals are at risk.”

- Phil Arkow, National Link Coalition (USA)

44% of women (6.2 million) women aged 15 and older have reported some kind of abuse in their intimate partner relationship in Canada.

Every six days, a woman in Canada is murdered by her intimate partner.

There are elevated risks of violence for women who identify as Indigenous, queer, a visible minority, or are experiencing life with a disability.

89% of Canadian Violence Against Women shelter residents indicate that there has been some form of animal abuse in the home. 85% of these survivors indicate that their children witnessed the animal abuse.

(SOURCE: https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FE_WO/Brief/BR11643004/br-external/ArmaghHouse-WEB-Brief-10588690-e.pdf)



The Impact of SafePet, with Your Support

SafePet Ontario's unique mission is two-fold:

1. We provide pet-safekeeping for survivors of family violence and sex trafficking;
2. We educate frontline workers (law enforcement, veterinarians, Victim Services, VAW workers, and child protection workers) and the public about the "link" among animal abuse, elder abuse, child abuse, and intimate partner violence in families.

We are the only province-wide charity of our kind, and with your generous support we will:

- **Increase our capacity** to triage requests for service, allowing us to serve more clients across all of Ontario—ultimately enabling more victims to escape unsafe situations faster.
- **Develop and implement an Urgent Response Program** that will quickly and efficiently assist high-risk clients who must flee with their pets within 24 hours.
- **Increase our presence in Northern Ontario** and Indigenous communities, where there is demonstrated need for our programming, by collaborating with existing services and strengthening our network of veterinarians, frontline workers, law enforcement, and transportation volunteers.

- **Provide on-demand online educational programming** on "the link" among animal abuse, elder abuse, child abuse, and intimate partner violence, and the need for pet-safekeeping options for survivors of family violence and human trafficking so local groups can develop programs tailored to their unique needs.
- **Increase awareness of our fostering program** among Ontario's Violence Against Women shelters, and assist these shelters in becoming pet-friendly themselves.
- **Fund more necessary veterinary interventions** for SafePet animals, many of whom have untreated injuries. This will allow survivors to devote their limited financial resources to housing, food, and childcare costs.
- **Recruit, screen, and train more volunteer foster homes** for our confidential network, with the ability to cover all necessary costs of pet care (including food, bedding, supplies, veterinary care, and client/pet transportation). We will then be able to place more animals in temporary safe homes all over Ontario.



35+ requests are received each month for pet-safekeeping services.

Approximately 40 pets are in our care, at any given time, with an average stay of 8 months (with approximately **50 on our waitlist**, waiting to be placed).

Our **clients range in age from 15 to 70+** and primarily identify as female or non-binary.

On average, **SafePet Ontario spends \$700 per pet** to cover medications, vet care, food, and pet supplies. Our service is entirely free of charge to clients.

We **accept all kinds of pets**, from dogs and cats to lizards, birds, and horses.

A Unique Mission. A Vital Service.



“Without intervention, the frequency and severity of the abuse increases over time and becomes volatile for those at risk. There is physical violence and other forms of abuse such as sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse, which can be equally as harmful. The most difficult part of a violent/abusive relationship is breaking the cycle of abuse.

SafePet Ontario is part of the plan that assists victims in breaking this cycle of violence by providing their pets with a safe place during this transition. As a retired police officer of 30 years, I know firsthand the impact this can have for victims of abuse and it's why I believe in this organization and our mission so deeply.”

- OPP Inspector Karen Moffatt (Retired) and SafePet Ontario Board Director

Survivors of family violence and human trafficking should never be forced to choose between their own safety and that of their companion animals. Your support of SafePet Ontario will ensure that survivors do not have to make that impossible choice.

Join us in our mission of helping survivors and their pets find safety when they need it most. As a supporter, you'll receive regular updates about the impact SafePet Ontario is making through your generosity and receive recognition of your gift where appropriate.

“

In the past I have stayed in an abusive relationship because I couldn't bring my cat with me to where I was living. I'm fighting for a healthy and happy life for my daughter and I ... we both need our cat in our lives. She's family."

- SafePet Client

"I'm so grateful for everything that your organization has done for us. My family is finally back together."

- SafePet Client

"Just when I thought I had no choices, when I thought I tried my hardest and felt like I was failing, SafePet came into mine and my children's' lives, offering support with wide-open arms. I'm in tears wishing I can do more to show you my gratitude."

- SafePet Client

"I am so very thankful for you and all you do to help people like me. Thank you for finding such an amazing foster for [my cat], for ensuring that his diabetes was managed and that he was loved at a time when I couldn't take care of him. It's really hard to find someone who can take care of him with his medical needs. It was such a huge relief that your organization took him in. I am so impressed with SafePet Ontario - from the updates, to the compassionate understanding, to the generosity. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart!"

- SafePet Client



For more information, to sponsor,
foster or donate please contact:

Hayley Rose Glaholt, Ph.D., M.Sc.
Executive Director

SafePet Ontario
(formerly Link Coalition Toronto)

executivedirector@safepet.ca

Charity Registration Number:
790266316 RR0001

www.safepet.ca



SafePet
ONTARIO

Follow Us



[@safepet_ontario](https://www.instagram.com/safepet_ontario)



[SafePet Ontario](https://www.facebook.com/SafePetOntario)



[@SafePetOntario](https://twitter.com/SafePetOntario)



[SafePet Ontario](https://www.linkedin.com/company/SafePetOntario)