

Proceedings  
*from the*  
National Technology Assessment Workshop  
*on*  
Animal Assisted Programs  
*for*  
Youth At Risk

## INTRODUCTION

With the support of the Laura J. Niles Foundation, The Humane Society of the United States and the Center for Prevention of Youth Violence of the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health held a landmark national conference on evaluation of animal assisted programs for youth at risk on December 6-7, 2007 in Baltimore, Maryland. The National Technology Assessment Workshop on Animal Assisted Programs for Youth At Risk successfully forged relationships between animal assisted programs and leading evaluation researchers, increased support for evaluation among program administrators and staff, identified new evaluation strategies, and laid the groundwork to advance research and recognition of animal assisted interventions in the context of youth violence prevention.

The conference was the culmination of a three-year project by the Humane Society of the United States that also included:

- A pioneering ethnographic study documenting expectations for program outcomes and mechanisms of change in five animal assisted programs;
- An extensive, first-ever survey of dog training programs for youth at risk;
- Provision of assistance to new evaluation research projects at animal assisted programs for youth at risk;
- Identification of additional new evaluation projects related to animal assisted interventions;
- An expert group meeting of leading researchers that discussed conference findings and future directions for evaluation in the field of animal assisted programs; and
- Development of an undergraduate online course in animal assisted programs for youth at risk.

In the report that follows, we summarize the proceedings of the conference and the expert meeting that followed.