

Coming Together to Help Victims of Animal Abuse: A Pro Bono CLE for Lawyers and Animal Welfare Organizations

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Joann M. Lytle

McCarter & English CLE Program

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Each year in Pennsylvania, thousands of animals are victims of abuse and neglect at the hands of their owners. The fortunate ones are rescued by dedicated animal welfare organizations, who file criminal charges against the abusers—but what happens to the animals after that? Unless an owner willingly surrenders, an abused animal can languish at a shelter for months or even years as the criminal process drags on. Caring for victims of animal abuse places a tremendous strain on the resources of the welfare organizations, especially in large hoarding situations, and remaining in cages at a shelter, ineligible for adoption, places a tremendous strain on the animals themselves.

Pennsylvania's recently-enacted Costs of Care of Seized Animals Act is a powerful tool to help rescues recover the costs of caring for these animals while the criminal case is pending and also expedites the forfeiture and subsequent adoption of animals whose owners refuse to pay.

This program, hosted by McCarter in conjunction with the Bucks County SPCA, includes:

1. Learning the nuts and bolts of investigating reports of animal cruelty and neglect, executing search warrants, taking animals into protective custody, and prosecuting abusive owners.
2. Learning how to file a Pennsylvania Costs of Care Petition and put on an evidentiary hearing.
3. Understanding the Pennsylvania Rules of Professional Conduct that are implicated in criminal and civil actions, including Rules 1.14, 1.16, 3.1, 3.6, 3.8, and 4.3.
4. Networking with representatives of various SPCAs and other animal welfare organizations who need your help.
5. Spending some quality time with adoptable kittens.

Speakers

Joann Lytle, McCarter & English, LLP

Penny Ellison, Adjunct Professor of Animal Law and Ethics, University of Pennsylvania Law School and **Barbara R. Paul**, Esquire, Assistant District Attorney, Philadelphia

Nikki Thompson, Chief Humane Society Police Officer, Bucks County SPCA