

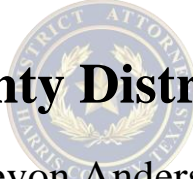
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DA Launches New Online Tool and Pilot Program to Combat Animal Cruelty

*Pilot Program, HOPE, will teach elementary school students
about responsible pet ownership and animal welfare issues*

District Attorney Devon Anderson announced today her office's new online tool for the public to report animal cruelty in Harris County and new pilot program called HOPE (Helping Our Pets through Education). HOPE is designed to educate elementary school aged children on how to properly care for their pets.

"Many of the animal cruelty cases we see start with young people and they frequently stem from a lack of education, a lack of compassion, and the cyclical nature of abuse," said DA Anderson. "The goal of this program is to instill empathy in our young people, to teach students how to recognize animal abuse, and to show them what they can do to stop it."

The initiative will be led by Animal Cruelty Specialist and Assistant District Attorney, Jessica Milligan. Under the program, prosecutors will go to elementary schools throughout Harris County and give a one hour presentations on proper pet care, animal cruelty laws, and the consequences of being a neglectful pet owner.

"We believe that children learn abusive behaviors from their surrounding environments and that if they observe it, they will continue the cycle themselves if they don't learn that it's wrong," said Animal Cruelty Specialist Jessica Milligan. "We also believe that individuals who abuse or neglect animals are more likely to carry on that abuse towards people later in life."

Students will also have a chance to interact with the program's mascot, "Hope", and hear her story. Hope is a 3-legged, black Border Collie mix. She was found at an animal cruelty scene in the Trinity River bed starved, burned, and with gunshot wounds to her face, chest, and leg. A witness took her to an emergency clinic and she was later rescued by the Milligan family.

Educators interested in signing up for the HOPE Program can fill out a form on our HOPE page which can be found on our [DA website](http://www.harriscountyda.com): www.harriscountyda.com under "Crime Prevention".

The Office is also now accepting animal cruelty reports from the public. Reports can be made by filling out an electronic form on the [DA website](http://www.harriscountyda.com): www.harriscountyda.com. The form is located under the “Crime Victims” tab. It asks for the tipster’s name, telephone number and information regarding the reported animal cruelty.

