

## IN THIS ISSUE

### FRONT PAGE

**A U Will Stop Making  
SA Victims Sign  
Confidentiality  
Agreements**

**Page 2**

**Front Page Story cont.**

**Page 3**

**Front Page Story cont.**

**Page 4**

**For Decades, Domestic  
Violence Shelters Didn't  
Always Accept Pets.  
Here's Why That's  
Changing.**

**Page 5**

**For Decades, Domestic  
Violence Shelters Didn't  
Always Accept Pets.  
cont.**

**Page 6**

**Johnny Manziel  
Domestic Violence  
case to go to  
Grand Jury**

### BACK PAGE

## HAPPENINGS

### STAFF

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# FOCIS NEWSLETTER

## JUNE 2016

### American University Will Stop Making Sexual Assault Victims Sign Confidentiality Agreements

By Tyler Kingkade Senior Editor/Reporter, The Huffington Post [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)

**American University will no longer require students reporting that they were sexually assaulted to sign a confidentiality agreement.**

American, a private university in Washington, D.C., is making a series of changes to how it handles sexual assault cases, according to a document released by an alumna who petitioned for the school to overhaul its procedures. Several of the reforms appear to respond to allegations in a federal complaint filed this year by Faith Ferber, an undergraduate at American.

Ferber had to sign a confidentiality agreement before she could participate in a disciplinary hearing for the male student she said sexually assaulted her, according to documents shared with The Huffington Post. Federal guidelines say schools are not allowed to require confidentiality once a sexual misconduct case has been resolved.

American's changes are a "really good start," Ferber told Huffington Post on Wednesday. But she said she still has concerns after an administrator publicly criticized her for filing the federal complaint accusing AU of violating the gender equity law Title IX.

American alumni petitioned for reforms after news reports described how the school handled the assault case involving Ferber. The petition garnered nearly 85,000 signatures in a few weeks.

# **American University Will Stop Making Sexual Assault Victims Sign Confidentiality Agreements cont.**

**Bianca Palmisano, an alumna who started the petition, met with students and administrators on April 18 to discuss reforms. Changes were forwarded to the university's Sexual Assault Working Group for implementation, the university said.**

**"We made some important, incremental changes to policy with this petition, but more than anything, I know it inspired a lot of advocates working on this issue to keep pushing forward," Palmisano said. "And that's a big win for me."**

**Days later, however, Gail Hanson, AU's vice president for campus life, told the student newspaper that Ferber's federal complaint "discourages people from stepping forward, it doesn't encourage them, and we've already seen a little bit of evidence of that."**

**"If things don't work for you, everybody here is committed to continuous improvement, you just have to tell us, you don't have to file a complaint," Hanson told the Eagle student newspaper last week.**

**Ferber said such "victim-blame" makes her concerned the school "will always be reactive instead of proactive."**

**"It shouldn't take 85,000 people watching you to do what's right for your students," she said.**

**American confirmed it has agreed to changes listed in the document released by Palmisano, but didn't immediately have additional comment.**

**Ferber's federal complaint pointed out the confidentiality agreement and said the disciplinary hearing in her case was delayed six months because the school didn't want it to interfere with final exams.**

# **American University Will Stop Making Sexual Assault Victims Sign Confidentiality Agreements cont.**

The student she accused of assaulting her admitted responsibility and received one year on probation, according to Ferber. She said the university told her the student would be banned from Greek life, but he's now in a fraternity.

American's planned reforms replace the requirement that students reporting an assault sign a confidentiality agreement with a statement that will be read aloud. The statement will clarify that accusers and the accused in sexual misconduct cases will be able to share their experiences and will guarantee their First Amendment rights are protected.

AU also agreed to consider input from accusers when deciding punishment for offenders. Further, the school will not allow students on disciplinary probation to study abroad in an AU-sponsored program or participate in fraternity or sorority membership recruitment. The school said it would consider using Skype to hold "timely hearings" and avoid long delays.

The school also said students on probation will not be allowed to serve in student government or as elected Greek life officers, though they can belong to a fraternity or sorority.

Prior to Ferber's federal complaint, AU was already the subject of a U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights investigation over its handling of sexual assaults. That review began in March 2015.

# **For Decades, Domestic Violence Shelters Didn't Always Accept Pets. Here's Why That's Changing.**

By Gwendolyn Purdom, [www.washingtonian.com](http://www.washingtonian.com)

For long stretches of last year, Sherrilyn Grant and her two dogs lived in her car in neighborhoods around DC. It was the only place the disabled veteran could think of to get away from her abusive boyfriend.

After several domestic-violence shelters and veterans' groups told her they couldn't accommodate Chelsea, her Shih Tzu-Yorkshire terrier, and Blondie, her beagle-Labrador. "They're like my children," says Grant. Ever since they were puppies, Chelsea and Blondie have been a constant comfort. "What would I have done without them?"

Finally, one support group suggested she look into the Washington Humane Society's Safe Haven program, which serves people and pets in her situation. Blondie and Chelsea stayed with a foster family while Grant focused on finding a place to live. Today, all three are reunited and living with friends. But that doesn't change the fact that it took three or four programs turning her down and months living in a car before Grant and her dogs could find help. And she's among the lucky ones, some survivors, knowing how tough it can be to find a place that will house their animals, don't leave their abusers at all.

That reasoning is something advocates want to change. The conversation around domestic violence is growing more urgent, with NFL scandals and crimes on college campuses making headlines. What's more, the link between animal abuse and crimes against people is gaining prominence.

The FBI, for instance, announced this year that it would begin tracking animal abuse the same way it tracks homicides and arson. Experts hope this confluence of events means the moment has arrived for the plight of pets in domestic-violence situations, whether victims themselves or beloved companions hindering human survivors from finding safe shelter, to get the attention it deserves.

# **For Decades, Domestic Violence Shelters Didn't Always Accept Pets. Here's Why That's Changing, cont.**

Grant says her ex never abused Chelsea or Blondie. But according to the Animal Welfare Institute, surveys show that as many as 86 percent of domestic-violence survivors report that their pets have been threatened, harmed, or killed by their partners.

Allie Phillips, a lawyer and animal advocate, discovered this facet of abuse in her early years practicing law. When a client said she returned to her violent husband because she feared what would happen to her pets if she left them with him, Phillips was inspired to do more. In 2010, she started Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T), a program that encourages domestic-violence shelters around the country to build on-site pet kennels.

While services such as Safe Haven, which locate temporary housing for pets, are vital for many victims, Caroline Jones, president of Arlington's Doorways for Women and Families shelter, says her staff finds that for some people, being separated from pets during an emotionally volatile time is too much.

Doorways is currently the Washington area's only domestic-violence shelter that can house dogs, cats, and small pets such as turtles and hamsters. Federal legislation could mean more resources for such services. The Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act, introduced in the House and Senate last year, would, among other things, provide funding for shelters to add pet-friendly accommodations.

In DC, Mayor Muriel Bowser's plan to open seven new homeless shelters could also be an opportunity to serve four-legged survivors. Though no formal plans are in place, Blair Decker, a lawyer who works with Safe Haven, says she and her team hope to collaborate with the downtown women's shelter set to open this year to bring at least one on-site kennel to the District. For survivors unwilling to leave their best friends behind, it could make a life-or-death difference.

# Johnny Manziel Domestic Violence case to go to Grand Jury

Associated Press [www.nfl.com](http://www.nfl.com)

A Dallas grand jury is scheduled to consider this week whether to charge troubled NFL quarterback Johnny Manziel with attacking his ex-girlfriend in a January incident.

Prosecutors will present the Manziel case to a grand jury Thursday, Brittany Dunn, a spokeswoman for the Dallas County district attorney, said Tuesday. The grand jury could announce an indictment as soon as Monday. Police originally presented a misdemeanor assault case to prosecutors. That charge carries a maximum punishment of one year in jail and a \$4,000 fine.

Manziel, a former Cleveland Browns quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner at Texas A&M, is accused of hitting his ex-girlfriend Colleen Crowley so hard that she temporarily lost hearing in one ear.

Crowley requested and was granted a protective order against the 23-year-old quarterback that prevents him from seeing her for two years.

She says she and Manziel had a confrontation in a Dallas hotel room, which continued downstairs at the valet station. She said he forced her into a car and a valet ignored her pleas for help. The two drove to where her car was parked in front of a Dallas bar, she said in an affidavit. She accused Manziel of getting into the driver's seat and beginning to drive. She says when she tried to jump out of the car, Manziel stopped, dragged her back into the car and hit her.

Police said they have spoken to Crowley, interviewed several other witnesses and reviewed medical records. But they did not arrest Manziel, instead taking the unusual step of asking the district attorney's office to present the case to a grand jury.

It's not yet clear whether Manziel or Crowley will testify before the grand jury this week. The district attorney's office and lawyers for both Manziel and Crowley did not immediately respond to questions.

Manziel was cut by the Browns in March after two tumultuous seasons marked by inconsistent play and off-the-field headlines about his partying and drinking, including one stint in rehab. His future in the NFL is uncertain at best, and might be nonexistent without a second stint in treatment that two agents have demanded.

The little time Manziel spent on the field for the Browns the past two seasons, he didn't have much impact. He passed for 1,675 yards with seven touchdowns and seven interceptions in 14 games. and his admission after his rookie season that he didn't spend enough time preparing will be another factor in any team's decision to pick up Manziel. Cleveland delayed the quarterback's release for two days trying to find a trade partner, but Manziel's value has declined since his days as a dynamic playmaker with the Aggies.

# HAPPENINGS

## ANGER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Wednesdays, 6-7:30pm. Co-ed six week group, start date contingent upon sign-ups. must be a FRTH registered patient. Full attendance required for a certificate. \$40 fee for non-native clients. (No couples & NOT for Court Mandates). Contact Tom @ 532-6811, ex 270

## POSITIVE PARENTING & POSITIVE PARENTING OF TEENS

is done on an individual basis as space and time allow. \$30 fee for non-native clients. For info or sign up, Contact Mark @ 532-6811 ex 249.

## FOCIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

Women's Support Group Tuesdays 3 p.m. to 5p.m. Self-validation & processing of abusive relationships. Intake assessments must be done before entry into the group. For info, contact Brittany@ FOCIS PROGRAM, 532-6811 ex 270.

## BRAVE AT HEART CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

For anyone who has been touched by Cancer Meetings every 3rd Wednesday starting Feb 17th 2016 6:30 to 7:30 pm Call Ashley, 532-6811 ex.272

## GUYS TAKE CHARGE GROUP

Thursday afternoons, 3:30 to 4:30 Guys from 10 to 13 are invited For info or sign-up call Ashley, 532-6811 ex 272

## THURSDAY CRAFT GROUP

Explore both Modern & Traditional forms of beadwork. Thursday afternoons from 3:00pm to 5:00pm in the South Conference room, call Mark @ 532-6811 ex 249. for info or sign up.

## RED ROAD TO WELLBRIETY MEETING

For those that have suffered alcoholism and drug addiction and other forms of

self-defeating behaviors, you can walk the 12 steps of the Red Road to recovery.

WEEKLY MEETINGS ON WEDNESDAY @ 6.00 PM

@ FEATHER RIVER TRIBAL HEALTH

530-534-5394

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

## LOCAL DV SERVICES

### FOCIS PROGRAM SERVICES

Advocacy Services, Restraining Order assistance, court accompaniment, Community education and in-service training, Crisis intervention services, Women's Talking Circles, Resource information & referral service. Feather River Tribal Health 530-534-5394 ext. 270

### Catalyst DV Services

24-hour hotline for DV intervention & referrals, Emergency Shelter, Children's Program at HAVEN, Transitional Housing & Household establishment Drop-in centers, Individual counseling, Support groups, Restraining Order assistance & Court Accompaniment, Community Outreach. 24-Hour Hotline 800-895-8476 Oroville Drop-in Center 530-532-6427

### SHARP (Self Help and Referral Program)

Self Help center that provides general assistance to people who do not have attorneys. Assistance is provided in the areas of family law, guardianships, evictions, small claims, name changes, and restraining orders. 1675 Montgomery Street Oroville, 530-532-7015



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