

**WHAT'S IN THIS  
MONTH'S ISSUE:**

SAAM & Child Abuse Prevention Month  
Farmers Markets and Furry Friends  
Settlements & Verdicts

## APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS & CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

*By: Laura E. Laughlin, Esq.*

Every April, we observe two deeply important causes: Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month. These observances are an opportunity to not only raise awareness, but also to reaffirm our commitment as lawyers to protecting vulnerable individuals and supporting survivors on their journey to justice and healing.



### **Understanding the Issues**

Sexual assault and child abuse are among the most underreported and devastating crimes in our society. Survivors often carry lasting emotional, physical, and psychological scars — many of whom never receive the justice or support they deserve.

- Sexual assault affects people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. It includes any unwanted sexual contact or behavior, often committed by someone the victim knows.
- Child abuse encompasses physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect. Children rely on adults not only for care but for safety — and too often, that trust is broken.

At Messa & Associates, we have seen firsthand the courage it takes for survivors to come forward, and we are honored to stand alongside them — as advocates, advisors, and allies.

At Messa & Associates, we have seen firsthand the courage it takes for survivors to come forward, and we are honored to stand alongside them — as advocates, advisors, and allies.

## **Our Role as Legal Advocates**

Legal action cannot undo trauma, but it can empower survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. Our firm is dedicated to:

- Providing trauma-informed representation that prioritizes the survivor's voice and dignity.
- Guiding clients through civil cases for monetary compensation and other legal remedies.
- Listening to survivors to understand what is most important to them and giving them back their power through the civil justice system.
- Collaborating with counselors, advocates, and law enforcement to build strong, survivor-centered cases.

## **How You Can Help**

Awareness starts with knowledge — but change requires action. Here are ways you can make a difference:

- Learn the signs of abuse and sexual violence, and how to respond if someone confides in you.
- Support local organizations that provide crisis services, counseling, and prevention education.
- Be an advocate for safe schools, workplaces, and communities.
- Speak up when you witness harmful behavior or unsafe environments.

## **A Shared Responsibility**

We all have a role in building a safer, more compassionate society. This month — and every month — we stand with survivors of sexual assault and victims of child abuse. We believe in justice, accountability, and the power of the law to protect and restore lives.

If you or someone you know needs legal guidance related to abuse or assault, please don't hesitate to reach out. Our team is here to listen, support, and advocate.



### **About the Author:**

Laura has been a trial attorney for two well-known catastrophic personal injury lawfirms in Philadelphia prior to joining Messa & Associates. Laura has a passion for working with and helping children. In her career, she has stood up for many children and adults that have been victims of sexual assault or who were injured due to negligence. She has found a passion in representing people who need a fighter on their side.



# Farmers Markets and Furry Friends

As the weather gets warmer, people are enjoying the outdoors with their furry friends. However, your local farmers market might not be one of those places. Let's talk about the reasons some markets ban pets and how to keep people safe if yours allows them.

Some pet bans are being implemented at a state level like California's Health & Safety Code 114259.5, while others are the policy of individual farmers markets. The federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) exempts service dogs from this state prohibition, defined as "any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Emotional support dogs that provide comfort do not qualify as service animals under the ADA, and misrepresenting pets as service is punishable under penal code.

The bans or increased regulations come down to three main reasons: **premise liability, food safety, and accessibility.**

In a space like a farmers market, it can be difficult to determine who is at fault for an injury. Some farmers markets require their vendors to have liability insurance for situations like this. The Center for Agriculture & Food Systems explains that farmers markets can be held responsible for injuries that occur on property they don't own. Legally, if the farmers market creates a situation that draws people into or across hazardous situations, that can create liability for the market. Farmers markets have options to resolve these situations. They can put up signs or appoint a volunteer to let folks know about a hazard issue. Farmers markets should work closely with their insurers to identify means of reducing risk, as it's not possible to control all sources of potential liability.

Food safety is also a concern when having animals at the farmers market. The Produce Safety Rule (PSR) is one of the seven food safety regulations that are part of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The PSR sets a series of standards for safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of produce grown for human consumption. The FDA requires that reasonable and practical measures be taken to ensure that wild and domesticated animals do not become a source of contamination. At a local level, the City of Philadelphia has a long-standing policy under Chapter 46 of its Health Code, which states that live animals, such as pets, are not permitted in food facilities.

Accessibility for those with disabilities is also a factor when considering pets in these spaces. The Headhouse farmers market in Philadelphia sighted this reason in their dog ban. Given the narrow walkway, plus heavy foot traffic during busy seasons, dogs and leashes ultimately contribute to the clogging of walkways, making it challenging for people who use wheelchairs or walking assistance devices to navigate the market. They noted several customers have lost their balance or been injured by a well-meaning dog at the market.

While some markets in Pennsylvania, California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan have banned dogs altogether, there are safety recommendations to keep in mind if your market does permit dogs. The Service Dog Certifications outlines these crucial tips to ensure a positive experience.

## Safety Tips and Considerations for Bringing Your Dog

### **Watch for Food on the Ground:**

Farmers markets can be full of tempting smells and dropped pieces of food. Keep an eye out to prevent your dog from eating something harmful.

### **Respect Vendor Spaces:**

Ask for permission before allowing your dog to approach a vendor's stall, especially if they sell food. Some vendors may have concerns about dogs near their products.

### **Leash and Control:**

Keep your dog on a short, non-retractable leash for better control.

### **Consider Timing:**

Farmers markets can get very busy. Visiting during less crowded times can reduce stress for your pet.

### **Know Your Dog:**

Farmers markets can be difficult to walk around when they get full. Only bring dogs that are comfortable and well-behaved in crowded environments.

### **Preparation is Key:**

Bring water, a bowl, and waste bags to address your dog's needs.

### **Be Mindful of the Weather:**

Protect your dog from hot pavements and cold conditions as necessary.

### **Monitor Your Dog's Comfort:**

Watch for signs of stress and be ready to leave if your dog is not coping well.

## Settlements and Verdicts

- \$2 Million Recovery for a 71-year-old man who suffered a lacerated blood vessel during an interventional cardiology procedure
- \$1.5 Million Recovery due to a doctors failure to diagnose Cauda Equina Syndrome resulting in neurological injury and loss of mobility

**Messa & Associates**  
*We've got your back*

[WWW.MESSALAW.COM](http://WWW.MESSALAW.COM)

877 - MESSALAW



PHILADELPHIA OFFICE  
123 S 22ND STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103

P: (215) 568 3500 F: (215) 568 3501

NEW JERSEY OFFICE  
2000 ACADEMY DR., STE 200  
MT. LAUREL, NJ 08054

P: (856) 810 9500 F: (856) 810 9918

NEW YORK OFFICE  
5 PENN PLAZA, 23RD FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10001

P: (877) 637 7252 F: (888) 960 3501