



Patriot Military Family Foundation (PMFF) Patriot Service Dog Program

The Patriot Military Family Foundation (PMFF) has been providing service dogs for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and physical injuries for over 10 years in our Patriot Service Dog Program. In this time, we have trained and given away dogs to 75 veterans. Our objective is to provide veterans with dogs who will assist them in living more independently given their physical, mental, and emotional injuries.

To qualify for a service dog, the veteran will verify their military service, provide a letter of recommendation from their behavior health provider or other specialty provider, ie. orthopedics, neurosurgery/neurology etc., which will include confirmation that the veteran has completed all rehabilitation (mental and/or physical), and provide a letter sharing how the service dog will improve their quality of life to include daily function. The injury that the veteran is dealing with must have been sustained as a result of his or her military service.

1. Can the veteran's own personal dog be trained to become their service dog?

Service dogs require very special traits, temperaments and exceptional intuition to be molded into the working dogs they need to become. PMFF does not accept personal dogs for training.

2. What are the requirements for a veteran to receive a service dog from the Patriot Service Dogs Program?

The veteran must submit a letter to PMFF identifying why they need a service dog, provide a copy of their DD214, and provide a recommendation letter from their behavior health provider or other specialty provider, ie. orthopedics, neurosurgery/neurology etc. Their disability must have resulted from their military service and the veteran must have completed all necessary rehabilitation.

3. Do veterans pay for their service dog?

No. Veterans pay nothing for the service dog from the PMFF Patriot Service Dogs Program.

4. Do you provide service dogs for people who are not veterans?

No. We provide service dogs for veterans only.

5. What do service dogs do?

PTSD/TBI service dogs are trained to detect anxiety responses displayed by the veteran in potentially challenging environments and situations. They are trained to recognize, indicate and interrupt early signs of anxiety, panic attacks and nightmares, allowing the veteran to break the cycle and regain emotional control. We recommend that the veteran be under the care of a professional therapist who is familiar with therapy dogs.

Service dogs are also trained to perform physical functions that the owner is unable to perform themselves. These dogs can bring objects to people, press buttons on automatic doors, serve as a brace for people who are ambulatory or even help pull a wheelchair up a ramp. These dogs help people increase their independence and confidence.

6. How does a service dog help with flashbacks and panic attacks?

A veteran will display certain behaviors just before and during a flashback or panic attack. The dog is trained to recognize the early signals of these behaviors, interrupt them and redirect the veteran.

7. Can the veteran select their own dog?

No. The appropriate matching of the dog and veteran is an art and a skill. We learn a great deal about each veteran who qualifies for our program including lifestyle, family and home environment,



their range of physical, psychological and cognitive abilities and their individual personalities. Through this process, we can match the dog to the veteran's unique needs.

8. **Does a veteran have to live in North or South Carolina to apply for the Patriot Service Dog Program?**

Yes.

9. **Can any dog become a service dog?**

No. We select dogs based on a rigorous examination of temperament, structural soundness, and breeding. Even dogs that pass our evaluation don't necessarily make it to the end of training.

10. **Do you use shelter dogs as well as puppies purchased from a breeder?**

Yes. Occasionally a dog from a shelter has the right temperament and ability to socialize and be trained to be an ESD or therapy dog. Our trainers work with and depend on the advice of the shelter employees. Occasionally, shelter dogs have satisfactorily passed the rigorous training in the past.

11. **What breeds of dogs do you use?**

Temperament is key. Service dogs must be steady in every situation, must never display aggression, must have a high level of self-control, and be physically able to perform the duties asked of them. Service dogs must be approachable by the public. In general, most of the dogs we have trained and provided come from the following breeds: German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers and Labradoodles.

12. **What must be included in the application?**

The application must include the following:

- A copy of the veteran's DD214, showing an other than dishonorable discharge
- A letter written by the veteran identifying how the veteran will benefit from having a dog
- A letter of recommendation from their behavior health provider or other specialty provider, ie. orthopedics, neurosurgery/neurology etc.

13. **Where should the application be sent?**

Patriot Service Dogs
Patriot Military Family Foundation
c/o Lisa Hirn
129 Fast Lane
 Mooresville, NC 28117

OR

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ATTN Lisa Hirn