



A NEW LEASH ON LIFE

**We support our nation's
disabled veterans by restoring their
confidence and independence.**

K9s For Warriors Talking Points/FAQs

Determined to end Veteran suicide, K9s For Warriors provides highly-trained Service Dogs to military Veterans suffering from PTSD, traumatic brain injury and/or military sexual trauma.

To date, K9s For Warriors has graduated 1,000 Warrior-K9 teams and rescued more than 2,000 dogs overall. With the majority of dogs being rescues, this innovative program allows the K9/Warrior team to build an unwavering bond that facilitates their collective healing and recovery.

1. Why is it needed?

- a) Roughly 20 Veterans who served post-9/11 commit suicide daily.
- b) Around 20% of post-9/11 Veterans suffer from PTSD, equating to more than 700,000 veterans.
- c) Service members suffering from PTSD are at a higher risk for suicide.
- d) Around 700,000 dogs are euthanized in shelters every year. Many of these are wonderful dogs who can be trained as Service Dogs for Veterans in need.

2. What is PTSD?

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| a) Hyper-vigilance | d) Depression |
| b) Panic Attacks | e) Isolation |
| c) Insomnia | f) Hopelessness |

3. How does the K9s For Warriors program work?

Each month, Veterans arrive at one of K9s For Warriors' campuses to take part in a three-week, in-house training program at no cost to them. K9s For Warriors provides a trained Service Dog, housing, all meals, equipment, veterinary care, and training in a welcoming environment that provides essential peer-to-peer support. As the Service Dog is already trained prior to being paired with the veteran, the three-week training period is to teach the Warrior how to use his/her Service Dog, and to facilitate the bonding necessary for the two to be a successful team.

4. What types of dogs are used in the program?

At K9s For Warriors, we procure dogs from a variety of sources, including: animal shelters, dog donations, owner surrenders and starting in 2022 from select breeders. In 2022, our Veteran waitlist was longer than 4 years and Covid played a big role in that. It limited Warrior class sizes and greatly reduced our ability to rescue dogs from shelters. To reduce the wait time, we made



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the decision to acquire more dogs from breeders and other Service Dog agencies. Veterans now wait 18-24 months to be paired with a dog. Ultimately, we believe the decision saves more lives. Our procurement team continuously searches animal shelters, seeking suitable Service Dog candidates. Rescue dogs will always be the majority of dogs we procure.

5. How does a Service Dog help – what kind of skills are they trained to do?

- **Stand:** When the Service Dog stands in front of the Veteran, front and back legs of dog are parallel to the Warriors shoulders, to cause a barrier and space between the Veteran and other people
- **Brace:** When the Service Dog is in the stand cue the Warrior places their hands over the shoulders and back legs of the dog to brace up from a sitting or kneeling position to a standing position
- **Look:** When the Service Dog has the Veteran's back. Many Veterans experience hypervigilance and need eyes on everyone, but struggle when they can't see who is behind them. The dog moves to the Warrior's right side and sits facing behind them to watch his/her back
- **Lap:** When the Service Dog targets their forearms over the Warrior's thighs (lap) to provide deep-compression therapy calming the veteran's emotions and anxiety
- **Front:** When the Service Dog starts in a down position. The Warrior will walk 6-10 feet from the dog. When given the 'front' command, the dog will return to the Warrior and sit in front of the Warrior facing them. This is used primarily when going through a metal detector.
- **Under:** When the Service Dog will go under the Warrior's legs, chair, and/or desk/table. This command allows for the dog to stay in a down position to avoid being a tripping hazard to anyone moving around the warrior.
- The average Warrior is on 10-15 medications when they begin the program. 92% will reduce or eliminate prescription medications over time following their graduation from K9s For Warriors. *According to a survey done by Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida

6. Is it proven that Service Dogs work?

This treatment method is backed by scientific research (from University of Arizona's OHAIRE Lab) demonstrating Service Dogs' ability to help mitigate their Veteran's symptoms of PTSD while simultaneously restoring their confidence and independence.



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- A. The first study was published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* in February 2018. Results confirmed Service Dogs provide both physical and psychological benefits to Veterans' wellbeing.
- B. The second research study was published in the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* in June 2018. Data was gathered from saliva samples of participants to measure cortisol levels ("the stress hormone"). Researchers found that PTSD-sufferers who had a Service Dog produced cortisol levels close to those of a standard healthy adult.
- C. A third study was published in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* in February 2019. It found that the bond between Veterans and Service Dogs far exceeded that of a human-pet relationship.
- D. Another recent study published in *Nature* in January 2024 found that Veterans with PTSD who had Service Dogs showed healthier cortisol levels compared to those without

7. How is your nonprofit supported?

We continue to exist and thrive thanks to passionate individual and corporate donors and sponsors. Supporters contribute via many avenues: dog sponsorships, recurring monthly donations, third-party fundraising events, one-time donations, and many more.

Our volunteer base is invaluable to our program's success. They dedicate time and talent to cook meals for the Warriors, attend events to represent K9s For Warriors, as well as foster and raise future Service Dogs.

We are grateful to our corporate sponsors for donating supplies that contribute to the welfare of our dogs while in training. Merrick Pet Care provides all the dog food for our Service Dogs in training and research funding.

8. Where does donor money go?

We're proud to report that roughly 80% of our funds support operating and program costs. The remaining ~20% covers administrative costs to ensure the organization will continue to grow, and in turn, save more lives.

We have been awarded several top honors by leading charity-rating organizations for our transparency, program results, and use of donor dollars. Our accreditation profiles can be found on Candid (GuideStar), GreatNonProfits, and Charity Navigator.



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9. Our locations

K9s For Warriors' primary business operation facilities include: K9s For Warriors National Headquarters (Ponte Vedra, Fla.), Davis Family Mega Kennel (Ponte Vedra, Fla.), Petco Love K9 Center (San Antonio, Texas,) and the Warrior Ranch (outside San Antonio, Texas).

Learn more and become involved by going to our website: www.k9sforwarriors.org