



K9s For Warriors Talking Points/FAQs

Every day in the United States, approximately 20 Veterans take their own lives and more than 1,000 dogs are euthanized. Determined to end Veteran suicide, K9s For Warriors provides highly-trained Service Dogs — many of them rescues — to military Veterans suffering from PTSD, traumatic brain injury and/or military sexual trauma, at no financial cost to the Veteran.

Since 2011, K9s For Warriors has graduated more than 1,000 Warriors and rescued more than 2,000 dogs. 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 U.S. Veterans a day take their own life ([The Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)).
- b) Around 20% of post-9/11 Veterans suffer from PTSD, equating to more than 700,000 Veterans ([The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)).
- c) Service members suffering from PTSD are at a higher risk for suicide.
- d) More than 1,000 healthy dogs are euthanized in shelters every day ([ACPCA](#)). Many of these dogs could have been given a second chance and a new purpose.

2. What are some common PTSD symptoms?

- a) Hyper-vigilance
- b) Panic Attacks
- c) Insomnia
- d) Depression
- e) Isolation
- f) Feelings of hopelessness

3. How does the K9s For Warriors program work?

Each month, about a dozen Veterans arrive at K9s For Warriors for a three-week residential training program at no cost to them. K9s For Warriors provides a trained Service Dog, housing, meals, equipment, on-campus veterinary care, and training in a welcoming environment that provides essential peer-to-peer support. Since the Service Dog is already trained before being paired with the Veteran, the three-week training period is for the Warrior to learn how to use their Service Dog and to build the bond necessary for success.

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



Most of the dogs we procure are rescue dogs from shelters. We also accept dog and puppy donations, as well as collaborate with select purpose-bred and rescue providers.

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

- **Stand:** The Service Dog stands in front of the Veteran with its front and back legs parallel to the Warrior's shoulders to create a barrier and space between others.
- **Brace:** The Service Dog is in the "stand" position and 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:** The Service Dog looks out for the Veteran and "has their back." Many Veterans experience hypervigilance, especially in public, and need eyes on everyone, but struggle when they can't see behind them. The dog moves to the Warrior's right side and sits facing behind them to watch the Warrior's back.
- **Lap:** The Service Dog puts their arms over the Warrior's lap to provide deep-compression therapy, helping to calm anxiety. The Warrior is seated while the dog puts its front legs on the Warrior's lap.
- **Front:** The Warrior walks 6-10 feet away from the Service 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 security checkpoint, like a metal detector.
- **Under:** The Service Dog goes 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. This command is especially helpful at restaurants or on airplanes.

6. Is it proven that Service Dogs work?

The K9s For Warriors treatment method is backed by scientific research demonstrating the Service Dog's ability to help mitigate a Veteran's PTSD symptoms while simultaneously restoring their confidence and independence. Various studies have demonstrated the efficacy of Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD.

1. In June 2024, a first-of-its-kind National Institutes of Health-funded clinical trial published
2. in JAMA Network Open revealed that Veterans with Service Dogs had 66% lower odds of a PTSD diagnosis based on expert clinician assessment when compared to a wait-listed control group. Veterans with a Service Dog also experienced lower anxiety and depression levels, along with improvements in most areas of emotional and social well-being. This research, led by Dr. Maggie O'Haire at the University of Arizona, is the largest national study to date comparing Veteran and Service Dog teams to traditional methods alone for PTSD-afflicted Veterans and



further legitimizes the effectiveness of highly trained Service Dogs on Warriors with PTSD.

3. A study published in *Nature* in January 2024 found Veterans with PTSD who had Service Dogs had healthier cortisol levels compared to those without a Service Dog.
4. A study published in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* in February 2019 found that the bond between Veterans and Service Dogs far exceeded that of a human-pet relationship.
5. In a study published in the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* in June 2018, researchers gathered data from saliva samples of participants to measure cortisol levels (known as the stress hormone). Researchers found that those suffering from PTSD who had a Service Dog maintained cortisol levels close to those of a standard healthy adult.
6. A study published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* in February 2018 showed Service Dogs provide both physical and psychological benefits to Veterans' well-being.
7. The average Warrior is on 10-15 medications when they begin the K9s For Warriors program. A survey done by Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida found that 92% of Warriors reduce or fully cease the use of prescription medications over time following their graduation from K9s For Warriors.

7. How is your nonprofit supported?

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

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

One of the best ways to spread the word about K9s For Warriors is by sharing information. Many of our Warriors tell us they didn't know a Service Dog was an option for them until someone told them about K9s For Warriors.

To learn more about the various ways of supporting K9s For Warriors, visit www.k9sforwarriors.org and click on the Ways to Support tab.

8. Where does donor money go?

We are proud that historically, 80% of our funds support operating and program costs, meaning it goes directly back to our Warriors and Service Dogs. 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 Excellence in Giving, GreatNonProfits, and Charity Navigator.

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 (north of San Antonio, Texas).

To learn more, head to our website: www.k9sforwarriors.org