



Service Dogs/Assistive Technology

AMVETS advocates for increased research and use of assistive technology, including expanded use of assistive service dogs. Historically, quite a few pieces of legislation have been introduced related to service dogs to assist veterans with PTSD, in addition to a long-running VA study on PTSD service dogs that began with a series of serious mishaps.

While AMVETS supports advocating for PTSD service dogs, which are trained to perform tasks to specifically assist those with PTSD, we would like to see increased use of service dogs that perform tasks of daily life that a personal aid is currently coming in to help the veteran with, such as: getting dressed, doing laundry, retrieving items, and more. It not only saves money; it preserves a person's dignity and provides independence.

Currently the VA clinical team that is treating veterans with substantial mobility impairments determines whether it is best for the veteran to manage the impairment and live independently through the assistance of a trained service dog. But if other means, such as technological devices or rehabilitative therapy would provide the same level of independence, then VA will not authorize benefits for service dogs. We would like the veteran to have more of a say, and for VA to consider the pairings more often.

The substantial mobility impairments that VA is currently working with in considering service dogs for veterans are spinal cord injury or dysfunction or other chronic impairment that substantially limits mobility, including, but not limited to a traumatic brain injury that compromises a veteran's ability to make appropriate decisions based on environmental cues (e.g. traffic lights or dangerous obstacles) or a seizure disorder that causes a veteran to become immobile during and after a seizure event. We would like to see the list of these mobility impairments expanded.

In addition, we advocate for continued advancements of assistive technology for amputees, those suffering from mobility limiting diseases and illnesses, and spinal cord injured veterans. This type of technology includes:

- Adaptive Driving Vehicles
- Adaptive Sports
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices
- Electronic Aids to Daily Living
- Electronic Cognitive Devices
- Powered Mobility & Seating
- Specialized Computer Access