



TAZ Owner Mike Riley

## SERVICE DOGS

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I have been getting asked about service dogs. I have received the following information about what is going on with service dogs. The article below, is actually from the Prosthetics Chief in Washington D.C. "The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) supports the issuance of guide dogs by outside agencies to eligible veterans who receive aids for the blind as part of medical and/or rehabilitative services. VA supports the collaborative efforts between guide dog agencies and VA medical centers to provide guide dogs for blinded veterans. These agencies have a proven and consistent record in their

delivery model, training and selection of dogs and owners. These agencies also provide their animals free of charge. If the veteran becomes adjusted to a guide dog, the dog is the veteran's property and the veteran is responsible for procuring and paying for license tags (if required) food, and for liability of any damages inflicted by the dog on others. Veterinary treatment and harness repair services by the VA. In 2001, Section 2 of Public Law 107-135 was passed so that the Secretary may provide service dogs to eligible veterans who are hearing or mobility impaired. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) established a work group to implement Section 2 of Public Law 107-135.

The Work Group was to review the impact of the law, current private practices, research literature, and develop an implementation plan. The work group concluded that based on widely varying delivery models, no evidence based assessment tools and/or clinical indicators for prescription criteria, and the lack of industry standards and relative and reliable information, VA was not in the position to provide service dogs at that time. A lack of funding was not an issue. To develop the information needed to establish an implementation plan, VHA funded a 36-month project and two short term pilot projects. The research project began in October 2003. The two short term pilot projects included a 12-month study at VA Medical Center (VAHC) Pittsburgh, PA and an 18 month study at the Michael DeBakey VAMC, Houston, Texas. The 12-month study was a comparison of service dogs versus assistive devices in terms of performing tasks, reliability, reduction in the need for care-givers, and the effectiveness of service dog training.

The 18-month study focused on the effect of service and hearing dogs on an individual's health, function, and mobility. These projects started in May and March 2004, respectively. On April 12, 2006, VA received the final report on the 18-month study. On August 24, 2006, VA received the final report on the 12-month study. The final study was completed in December of 2006. The workgroup reformed to analyze the results of these studies and is making recommendations to the Secretary. If the findings are in favor of providing service dogs' and the Secretary approves, the workgroup will develop an implementation plan covering the prescription criteria as well as criteria for service dogs' training and abilities. I hope this information is helpful to you."