



According to an article released by CBS News called “Fake Service Dogs a Growing Problem,” real service dogs help assist a wide variety of individuals, including “people who use power or manual wheelchairs, have balance issues, have various types of autism, need seizure alert or response, need to be alerted to other medical issues like low blood sugar, or have psychiatric disabilities”. Obviously, service dogs help positively affect a massive amount of disabled individuals. What could go wrong?

Fake service dogs, that’s what. CBS News released a shocking report back in December that followed the rising number of “fake” service dogs that were available over the Internet. Actually, more specifically, the “legal” documents, tags, and vests were available to anyone over the Internet, which means any dog can be disguised as a service dog.

But why would the general public spring for such deceit? Having a service dog provides lots of public perks. For example, people with service dogs can cut the line at airports. Or these dogs are allowed in movie theatres, so regular dog owners now have a loophole in which to watch new movie releases with their pooch.

“Just like anyone who breaks the rules. It ruins it for the legitimate needs of people who need their dogs,” says said Anne-Marie Karash, an associate director of the Humane Society of New York. Which is quite unfortunate, seeing as though there is a particularly large demand for service dogs among civilians. However, such complications in medicinal canine acquisition also affects the growing number of combat veterans returning home from war. Service dogs have been proven to help soldiers rehabilitate from mental illnesses like PTSD, and physically aide those who have been through significant physical trauma that perhaps required limb amputation or the need for a wheelchair.

The U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs reports that one in five combat veterans develops Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, either during or shortly after combat. The Mayo Clinic defines PTSD as having three main categories of symptoms: “re-experiencing symptoms,” “avoidance symptoms,” and “hyperarousal symptoms”. These categories can be simplified to describe symptoms of flashbacks and nightmares, feeling of guilt and depression, and insomnia, respectively. With this new insurgence of service dog fraud, however, all of these veterans who are affected by PTSD and other ailments are going to have a more difficult time using legitimate service dogs to maintain their previous standard of living, since businesses and other establishments are becoming more aware of fraudulent dogs and are therefore mistrusting the whole service-dog system.



Where can one find legitimate service dogs? To be honest, it takes some hunting through different resources, whether it be with the help of online search engines to help pinpoint the available organizations who support legitimate service dogs, to smaller print announcements perhaps around one's neighborhood. Some organizations personally train their service dogs, while others simply teach an individual how to train their dog to become a legitimate service dog. While the latter appears to contribute to the problem of the influx of fake service dogs, Brian Sabatino, a dog trainer, insists that there is one surefire way to tell the difference between a legitimate and fraudulent service dog: "They didn't go through the training...anything could set them off."

The VA used to be an excellent resource for distributing and training serviced dogs for veterans, but with the recent scandals regarding the VA and its frequent inadequate care, veterans are advised to seek contact other organizations elsewhere with their inquiries regarding service dogs.

One of those organizations is Operation: I.V, a 501(c)3 non-profit founded in 2012 that helps combat veterans heal from both PTSD as well as traumatic brain injuries. Its founder, Roxann Abrams, is a Gold Star Mother who lost her son SFC Randy Abrams in 2009. Randy took his own life after experiencing a PTSD flashback from his service in Iraq. Randy had undiagnosed PTSD- a common occurrence among combat veterans either due to mistakes made by the medical field or simply the individual's failure to report such grave symptoms.

As a result of her son's death, Abrams founded Operation: I.V. so that combat veterans who served in either Iraq or Afghanistan have a place to receive treatment through a specialized "VIP", or "Veteran Intervention Plan" program. "VIP" offers ten different rehabilitation programs, including hyperbolic oxygen therapy, service dogs, and anxiety reduction therapy. Additionally, veterans may also partake in programs such as job retraining, business mentoring, and educational assistance. Again, while there is no cure for PTSD, the programs provided by Operation: I.V. can drastically improve a veteran's mental health and overall outlook on life.

Originally posted 2016-09-04 08:24:53.



Share this:

- [Facebook](#)