

Each Applicant is required to submit an application online or as a paper form. The application offers insight into the veteran's life, including their disabilities, family, home, and work environment.

To qualify for our Service Dog Training Program, an Applicant must meet the following criteria:

- US military service with an Honorable Discharge
- A service-related diagnosis of post-traumatic stress verified by a licensed professional *(at a minimum, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)).*
- Applicant commits to therapy while in the Service Dog Training Program, at a minimum, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). The veteran must participate in regular therapy at least once a month, whether it be one-on-one, a group, in person or via Zoom. *(Med management support does not fulfill this requirement.)*
- During the interview process with a member of the Mental Health Team, the Applicant should be prepared to discuss prior anger management issues and anger coping techniques.
- Applicants must be, at a minimum, free of substance abuse for 6 months.
- Applicants must have a physical address and a stable living environment. Veterans experiencing homelessness will not qualify for this program.
- Applicants must have the ability to both physically and financially care for a dog. Any additional animals within the home environment must be compatible with the addition of a service dog.
- Every Applicant must agree to a background check to be considered for the program. Failure to provide the necessary information for the background check will result in automatic denial from the program.
 - Applicants with any felony conviction, or a state's equivalent, will be denied.
 - Applicants with any misdemeanor, or a state's equivalent, in relation to domestic assault or the issuing of a protective order will be denied.
 - Applicants can't have any history of animal abuse, including but not limited to, arrests, charges, and/or convictions for animal cruelty, abuse, and/or neglect.
 - If an Applicant has an open court case, they will be kept in the "pending" status until the court case is finished and the outcome can be verified.
 - On a case-by-case basis, Maine Paws for Veterans may request additional information for any background check report that is less than favorable or requires further clarification prior to final acceptance or denial into the program. The information will be sent to a designated Committee for review.
 - On a case-by-case basis, an Applicant can request a Committee hearing to provide facts in relation to his/her criminal background. The purpose of the hearing will be to consider additional information and determine whether the denial of entry into the program will stand or

be reversed. The Committee must make its recommendation within thirty (30) days of receiving the request, and it is final.

- The Committee will be composed of the Board President, the Executive Director, a Lawyer, and a Mental Health Professional.

Once an applicant is accepted into the Service Dog Training Program, then Maine Paws will evaluate a veteran's dog or place an appropriate canine with the veteran.

- Maine Paws will require a background check on any adult living in the household prior to placing a canine in the home.
- Maine Paws will not place a canine in a home with two other dogs already in the household.
- Maine Paws will not place an adopted dog in a household with children under 8 years old. If a puppy is placed, then the veteran will have to complete the program twice.