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Lois Pope LIFE Center for Military Affairs



PTS Service Dogs for Veterans Project National Convening



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The Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, Inc.

Since 1993, Leaders in Furthering Education (LIFE) and the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation have been dedicated to helping and improving the lives of the voiceless and vulnerable in our society- those who are disadvantaged, marginalized, or forgotten because of disabilities, socio-economic status, neglect, age, abuse, and other barriers. Founded by Lois Pope, one of America's most committed and creative philanthropists and humanitarians, the two non-profit organizations provide aid, assistance, and awards for disabled veterans, medical research, college scholarships, humanitarian relief, the performing arts, and animal welfare.



The Schultz Family Foundation, established in 1996 by Howard and Sheri Schultz, creates pathways of opportunity for populations facing barriers to success. The Foundation invests in innovative solutions and partnerships that unlock people's potential, and strengthen our businesses, communities, and our nation. In March 2014, the Schultz Family Foundation launched Onward Veterans, a national initiative that empowers post-9/11 veterans and their families to successfully transition to civilian life. In May, 2015, it launched "Onward Youth", a similar initiative focused on "opportunity youth," 16- to 24-year-olds who are out of school and not working. For more information about the Foundation and its work, visit schultzfamilyfoundation.org or follow them on Twitter @SchultzFamilyFd.



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Thank you

Friends,

On behalf of American Humane's Lois Pope LIFE Center for Military Affairs, thank you to everyone who was able to join us for our national convening to discuss how to improve the welfare and well-being of military veterans through the use of trained post-traumatic stress (PTS) service dogs.

PTS service dogs are vital to the health, well-being and recovery of many military veterans coping with mental health issues, yet there are no nationally published standards or widely accepted best practices for training, certifying and credentialing these vitally important service dogs.

Together, with your support, our goal is to begin establishing critical definitions and best practices that will serve to ensure veterans' access to properly trained, lifesaving PTS service dogs and improve access to all public spaces. Based on the work of our partners who joined us for this event, and with the help of a broader set of stakeholders, American Humane will form an independent scientific advisory committee comprised of leading service dog experts, mental health providers and veterinarians who will be tasked with drafting national standards for PTS service dogs.

This event and the work that follows brings new opportunities for assuring the effective pairing of PTS service dogs with our nation's heroes in need. Through the collaboration of all the entities participating in this catalytic event and those who partner with us in the months ahead, we hope to measurably improve the lives of our nation's veterans.

We are fully committed to this project and I hope you will join us as we move forward with this vital and long-needed effort. On behalf of those who served our nation and fought for our freedom, I offer my thanks to those who participated in the event and thank everyone in advance for the work yet to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin A. Ganzert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robin Ganzert, Ph.D.
President and CEO
American Humane

Executive Summary

On September 21, 2016, American Humane's Lois Pope LIFE Center for Military Affairs assembled nearly 40 thought leaders and stakeholders representing a diverse set of public and private perspectives with the goal of identifying ways to reduce barriers and improve access to standardized PTS service dogs for veterans. Specifically, participants were tasked to:

1. Develop an agreed-upon definition of PTS service dog
2. Provide input on national training/certification/credentialing standards for development by an American Humane Scientific Advisory Committee
3. Uncover all relevant information concerning additional barriers preventing veteran access to PTS service dogs for a longer-term roadmap

Work group efforts identified the following barriers as the most impactful and pervasive:

- Lack of training standards
- Cost to obtain, sustain and replace dog
- Lack of clear policies, regulations and guidelines
- Lack of awareness and understanding
- Shortage of dogs
- Lack of clinical guidelines

Overall, this discovery process helped to uncover the numerous, complex issues involving veterans and PTS service dogs. As we move forward, continued long-term collaboration from all stakeholders is necessary to begin to develop solutions for each of the identified issues.

As a result of the day's input, American Humane has defined a four-step vision to achieve our initial goal and address one of the key issues that was identified: Ensuring PTS service dogs for veterans meet the highest standards and veterans can obtain standardized credentials for their dog to aid in public access.

1. American Humane's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) will develop and test training standards for PTS service dogs.
2. American Humane will oversee a group of certified PTS service dog evaluators across the country who have completed a specialized curriculum through American Humane. These evaluators will be responsible for assisting and evaluating veterans and their PTS service dogs to meet the prescribed training standards.
3. Veterans who pass the American Humane PTS service dog test will receive a certificate from the evaluator that can be submitted to receive a nationally standardized credential that recognizes their PTS service dog.
4. An awareness campaign will help educate veterans on this process and its advantages.

By working collaboratively to develop national training standards, as well as a process for evaluating and credentialing PTS service dogs, American Humane creates several benefits:

- Appropriate dogs will be selected and utilized for this specialized population, thus improving the public safety, as well as the well-being of service animals.
- Access barriers will be lessened for veterans through a standardized identification card for their PTS service dog.
- Service dogs helping veterans cope with invisible wounds will be legitimized and therefore more widely used to aid veterans in need.
- This solution reaches the largest number of veterans with no limitations on where they received their service dog. The focus is on the dogs' ability to safely perform targeted tasks.



Focus, Goals and Participants

Overall Project Theme

Ensure the well-being of veterans through the use of PTS Service Dogs.

Overall Project Objective

Reduce barriers and improve access to standardized PTS service dogs for veterans.

The Day's Goals

The convening was designed as a blueprint for the complicated work ahead. The organizers recognized there was only so much that could be accomplished in one day with a limited audience of less than 50 participants. However, the purpose was to discover and uncover as much relevant information relating to the project's overall theme and objective as possible. As one step in a longer term, co-created effort, the goals for the day were:

1. Develop an agreed-upon definition of PTS service dog
2. Gather input to develop national training/certification/credentialing standards for use by an American Humane Scientific Advisory Committee
3. Uncover all relevant information concerning additional barriers preventing access by veterans to PTS service dogs (and who can help) for a longer-term roadmap

Participants

Nearly 40 participants representing a broad cross-section of the veteran and service dog communities gathered from across the country to consider the gaps, barriers, capacity and capabilities needed to improve outcomes for veterans suffering from PTS.

The following participating companies, organizations and agencies were in attendance:

America's VetDogs	Dept. of Labor	One Mind for Research
American Airlines	Dept. of Veterans Affairs	Purdue University
American Humane	Freedom Service Dogs	Schultz Family Foundation
Assistance Dogs International	Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America	Semper K9 Assistance Dogs
Bob Woodruff Foundation	Mars Petcare US	USMC Wounded Warrior Regiment
Canine Companions for Independence	National Institutes of Health	Warrior Canine Connection
Charm City Canine Company	National Restaurant Assoc.	Western Veterinary Association
Cohen Veterans Bioscience	National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations	Zoetis
Dept. of Defense	National Education for Assistance Dog Services	

Methodology

The Day's Format

Convening attendees were assigned to three work groups comprised of a diverse group of professionals with backgrounds in service dog delivery, mental health services, philanthropy, disability accommodation and a variety of industries (transportation, hotel, restaurant, etc.). Most of the day was devoted to three work sessions led by facilitators charged to help groups move conversations towards the day's goals.

Each work group was comprised of approximately 15 participants plus one or more facilitator(s). Work groups were purposely created to ensure an adequate dispersion of clinicians, government policy experts, service providers, funders, etc.

Work session 1 focused on uncovering barriers to access and the impact of those barriers on veterans. Work session 2 focused on defining a PTS service dog. Lastly, work session 3 focused on the elements and criteria of a national standard for training, certifying and credentialing PTS service dogs.

Facilitators used a variety of methods designed to promote an equal voice for all participants. All relevant and expressed ideas were captured. By the end of the one-day event, participants had contributed more than 500 inputs related to meeting the overall objectives and goals.

The ideas developed from the convening will be further analyzed and refined into a final report aimed at building an eventual "road map" for the work ahead. Shared with participants and the broader audience of stakeholders and advocates, this road map will leverage post-event working groups to reach the project's long-term objective over the course of many months.

Work Session 1

Focus: Barriers preventing veteran access to PTS Service Dogs were identified, potential solutions discussed and recommendations made for moving ahead. Key stakeholders and their respective issues and requirements for project buy-in were also explored.

Initial elements considered during this work session:

- Confusion between service, therapy and emotional support animals
- Lack of training for customer-facing employees on how to identify/inquire about the legitimacy of a service dog
- Supply and demand issues
- Lack of evidence-based research to support the efficacy of PTS service dogs
- Abuse of current laws relating to service dogs
- Confusion regarding current laws relating to service dogs (ADA, Air Carrier, Fair Housing, etc.)
- Strategies for how to effectively address these barriers

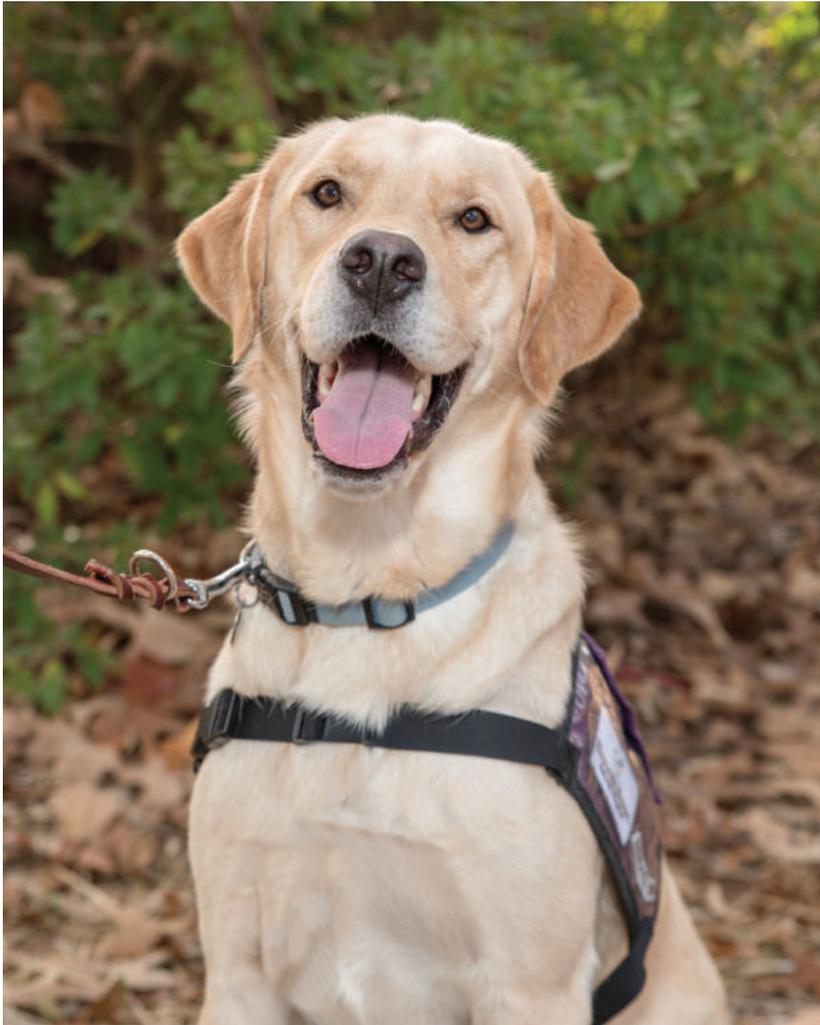


Work Session 2

Focus: Develop and recommend a definition of a PTS service dog. Identify the key elements and criteria that underpin the definition and supporting rationale.

Initial elements considered during this work session:

- What are some ways to make it easier for a veteran to obtain public access with a PTS service dog?
- Review the ADA definition and identify gaps
 - Should PTS service dogs wear a vest?
 - What language should be on the dog's vest?
 - Should the veteran carry identification/credentials regarding the PTS service dog?
 - What language/information should the credentials include?
- Note: Although the ADA does not require any of the above, our goal was to identify best practices in order to facilitate ease of public access for veterans and PTS service dogs.



Work Session 3

Focus: Identify and discuss key elements required to create national standards for training, certifying, and credentialing PTS service dogs. Create and prioritize a list of recommended actions. Revisit and refine the barriers preventing access in light of any new information and understanding generated during the course of the day.

Elements considered during this work session:

- Explore the idea of immediate goals and longer-term dog testing standards – for example, is the first step in establishing best practices to ensure the dog, at a minimum, can pass a basic public safety test?
- Should there be different levels of training based on the number or difficulty of tasks that the PTS service dog needs to perform to help the veteran? What might that entail?
- How might veterans have their PTS service dog tested and credentialed?
- Should a PTS service dog be required to pass a re-certification evaluation? If so, how often?

Note: Solutions need to be geared to helping the largest number of veterans, not only those who are able to obtain a dog from an accredited service dog agency or from the VA (i.e., inclusive of owner-trained service dogs that meet performance standards).



Service Dog Definition

Each work group was asked to define a PTS Service Dog both in terms of key elements and in terms of criteria for use. One or more work groups developed the following elements and criteria.

Key Elements & Criteria

1. **Dog:** size, age, breed neutral; temperament; health; actual history & behavior
2. **Registration:** ability to demonstrate a legitimate service dog placement & reduce frauds/fakes
3. **Training, certification, and credentialing:** national standard; public access; demonstrated behavior; identifiable through registry, chip, vest and/or ID
4. **Competence, predictability, and safety:** individually tailored; PTS service work & tasks
5. **Individual with PTS or PTS symptoms:** clinician diagnosed; not limited to PTS (i.e. psychiatric service)
6. **Minimums:** control (including verbal); public access; PTS service work and task (at least one task specific to the individual); temperament tested; identifiable (tag/ID/QR code; web based; avoidance of HIPAA issues)
7. **Benefits:** improving quality of life

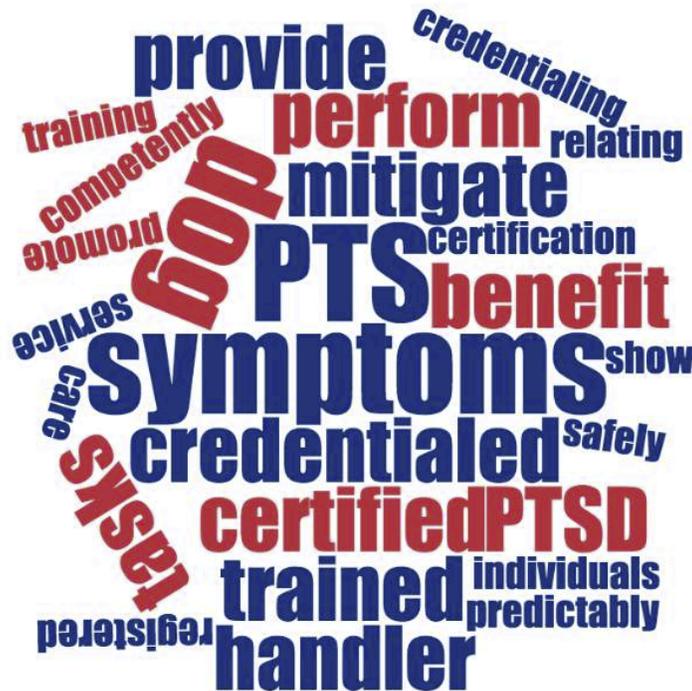


Diagram 1. Word cloud of definition key words

Starting from a baseline definition, each of the three work groups customized their definitions as follows:

Definition 1: A dog that is trained, certified and credentialed to perform tasks that promote benefit and mitigate symptoms for a handler with PTS.

Definition 2: A dog that is registered to show training, certification and credentialing to competently, predictably and safely provide PTS service care to individuals with PTS or symptoms relating to PTS.

Definition 3: A dog that is trained, certified and credentialed to perform tasks that provide benefit and mitigate symptoms for a handler with PTS.

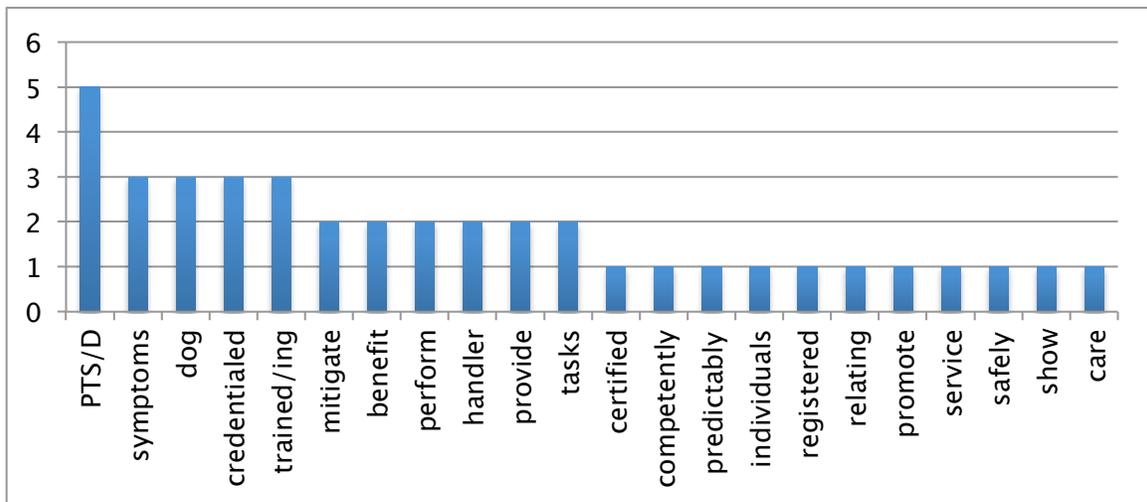


Chart 1. Frequency of words across three definitions

Given the three definitions and the frequency of common words used in each, it's clear participants felt strongly that the definition of a PTS Service Dog include the following words: PTS/D, symptoms, dog, credentialed/-ing, and trained/-ing.

Barriers to Access

Each work group was asked to identify barriers to access and possible actions that could be taken to mitigate the barriers.

Barriers

1. Lack of awareness and understanding in the general population
2. Lack of training standards
3. Lack of clear policies, regulations and guidelines
4. Shortage of dogs
5. Life-cycle of sustaining care
6. Costs to obtain, sustain and replace dogs
7. Demographics and background of end user
8. Emotional charge
9. Lack of measurement for progress
10. Lack of structure between parties getting dogs to users
11. Lack of collaboration among interested parties
12. Lack of data and research demonstrating impact
13. Lack of clinical guidelines

Actions

1. Launch a public service announcement campaign
2. Create a joint task force of decision makers
3. Build on/utilize existing standards
4. Designate a common location for standards
5. Close ADA loopholes
6. Ensure consistency in legislation between orgs (FHA, VA, etc.)
7. Obtain more funding, build public-private funding coalitions
8. Recruit more qualified trainers
9. Develop national performance standards
10. Identify or establish a third party to oversee synchronization and enforcement
11. Develop a uniform measurement for assessment of dog and human
12. Standardize empirically derived language
13. Host annual conference of key stakeholders
14. Standardize service dog production process
15. Create national standards to train, certify, and credential
16. Establish eligibility criteria (scales and alternatives)
17. Amend laws/regs to better achieve the project's goals

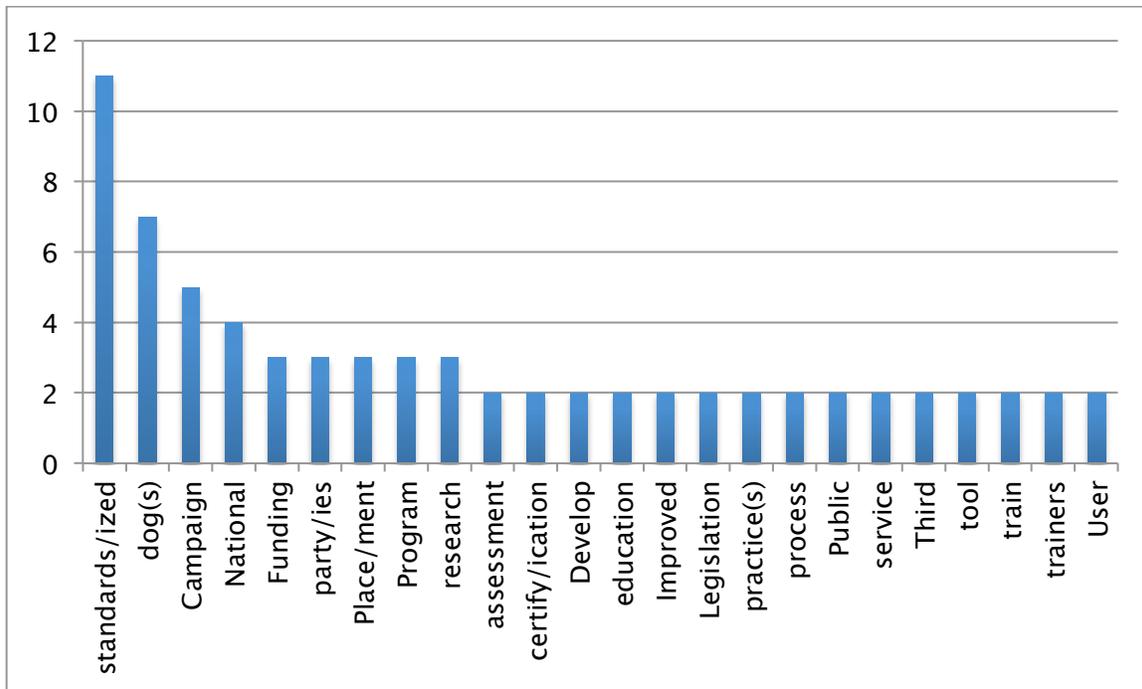


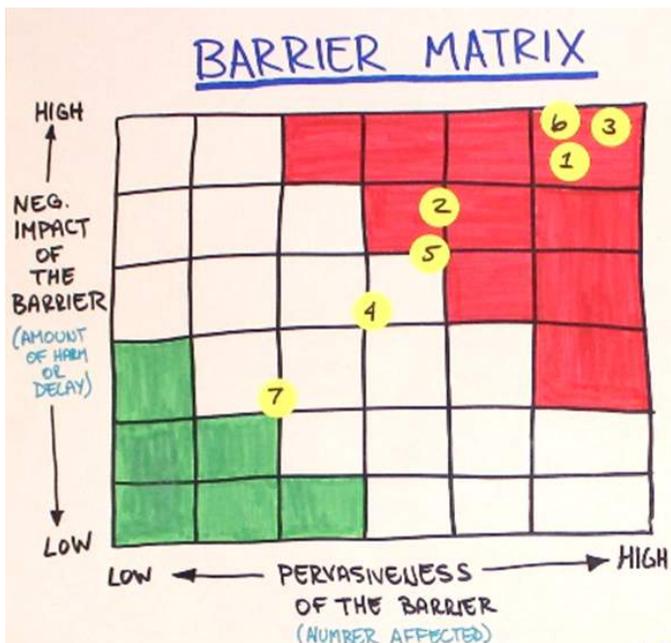
Chart 2. 'Action' words occurring two or more times in work group results

These raw data provide an interesting perspective into perceived barriers and potential solutions to mitigation. However, work group *analysis* of the barriers and actions proved more useful in guiding and prioritizing efforts going forward.

The following pages depict how each work group (Red, White and Blue) analyzed and prioritized:

1. the negative impact and pervasiveness of the barriers, and
2. the actions to mitigate or eliminate barriers based on the action's importance and difficulty.

Red Team Barriers & Actions: Analysis

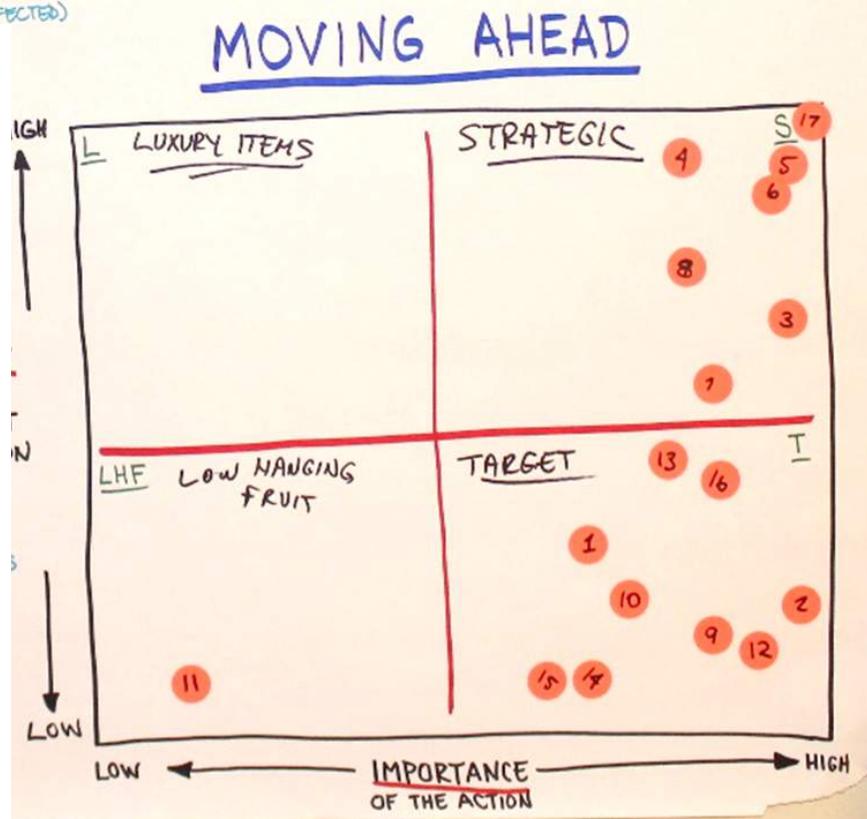


Barriers

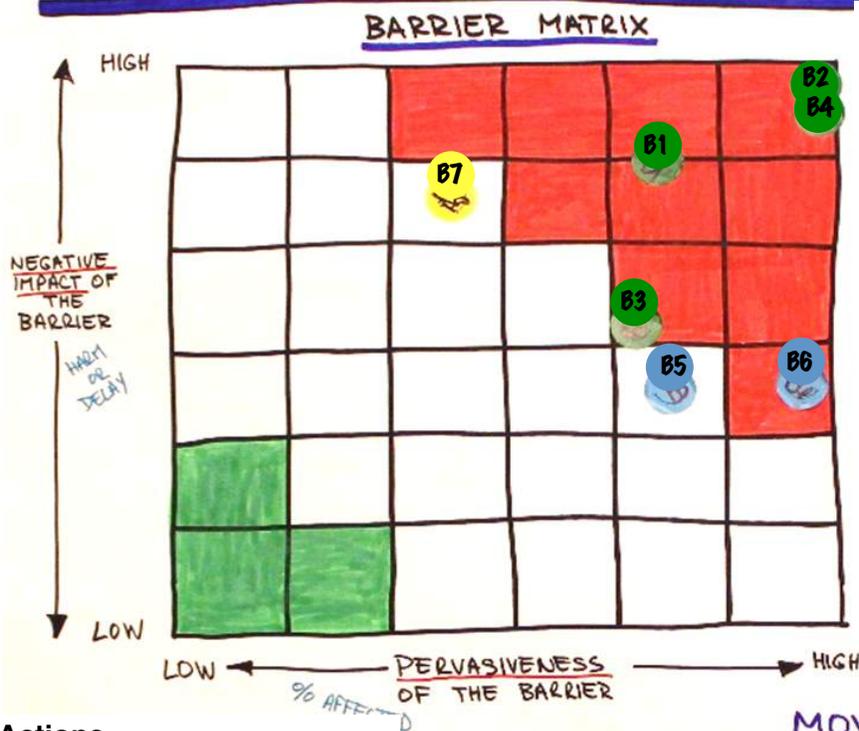
1. Lack of awareness and understanding (Actions 1-3)
2. Training standards (Actions 4-6)
3. Policies, regulations & guidelines (Actions 7, 8, 17)
4. Shortage of dogs (Actions 9-11, 17)
5. **Life-cycle of sustaining care** (Actions 12, 13 & 17)
6. **Costs: obtain, sustain & replacement** (Actions 14 & 17)
7. **Demographic & background of end user** (Actions 15 & 16)

Actions

1. National awareness campaign
2. Commission a targeted research campaign
3. National education campaign – all sectors
4. Standardized service dog production process
5. National standards: train-certify-credential
6. Standardized placement standards & process
7. Establish eligibility criteria (scales & alternatives)
8. Amend laws/regs to better achieve the project's goals
9. Campaign to recruit & train the dog trainers & dogs
10. Develop a pipeline econometric tool: supply & demand
11. Improved dog predictor tool: genetics, best practices
12. Standard certification & aftercare program: user & dog
13. Form funding coalitions: fed \$/public & private/life-cycle
14. User onboarding: improved timing & conversation
15. Standardized initial assessment & counseling
16. Program to ensure clinicians are culturally competent
17. Federal funding



White Team Barriers & Actions: *Analysis*



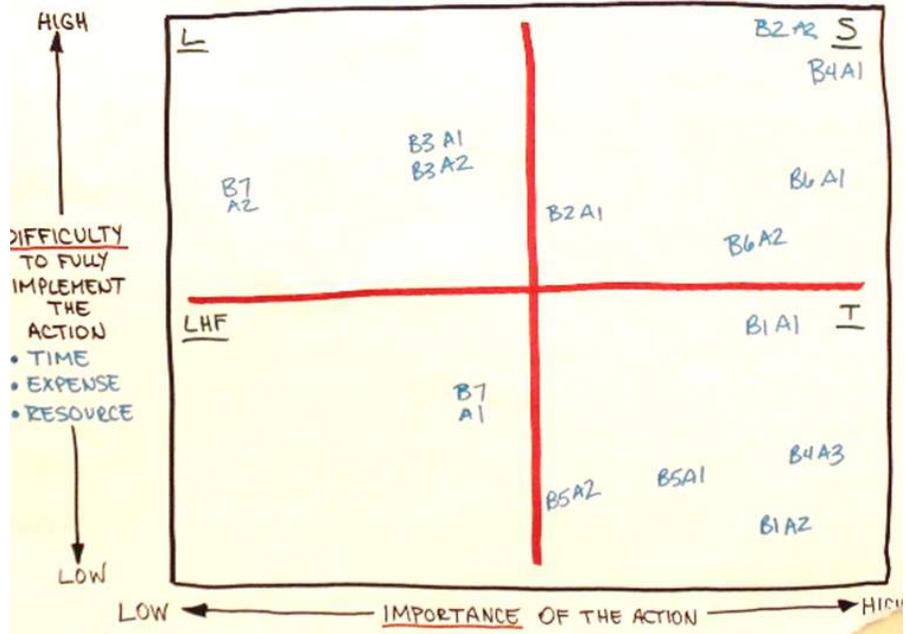
Barriers

1. Lack of awareness and understanding (Actions B1-A1 & B1-A2)
2. Training standards (Actions B2-A1 & B2-A2)
3. Policies, regulations & guidelines (Actions B3-A1 & B3-A2)
4. Shortage of dogs (Actions B4-A1 & B4-A2)
5. **Emotional Charge** (Actions B5-A1 & B5-A2)
6. **Lack of measurement** for progress (Actions B6-A1 & B6-A2)
7. **Lack of structure** between parties getting dogs to users (Actions B7-A1 & B7-A2)

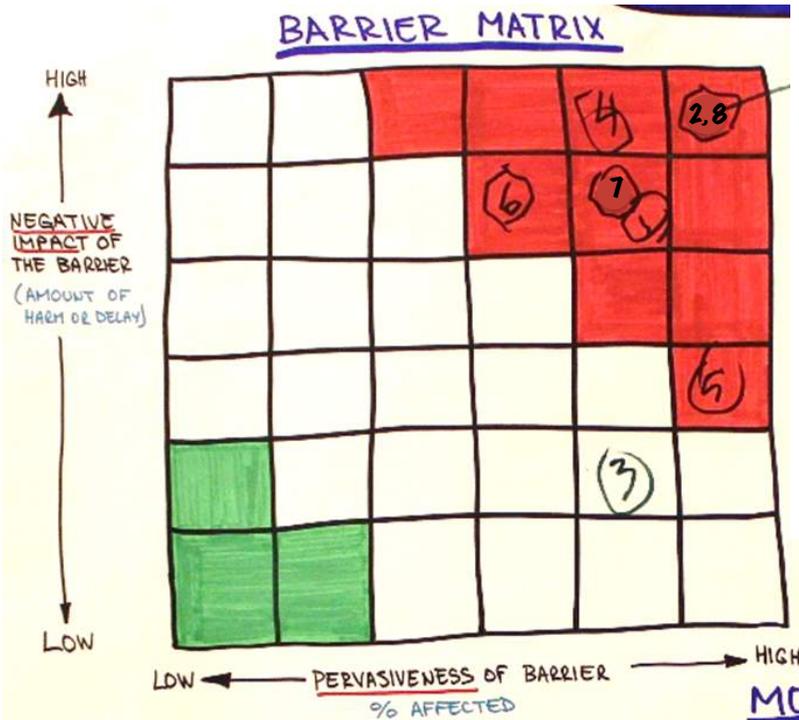
Actions

- B1-A1. Public service announcement campaign
- B1-A2. Joint task force of decision makers
- B2-A1. Build on/utilize existing standards
- B2-A2. Common location for standards
- B3-A1. Close ADA loopholes
- B3-A2. Consistency in legislation between orgs (FHA, VA, etc.)
- B4-A1. Funding
- B4-A2. More qualified trainers
- B5-A1. Develop National Performance standards
- B5-A2. Third party to oversee synchronization & enforcement
- B6-A1. Uniform measurement for assessment of dog & human
- B6-A2. Standardized language empirically derived
- B7-A1. 3rd Party entity
- B7-A2. Annual conference of key stakeholders

MOVING AHEAD



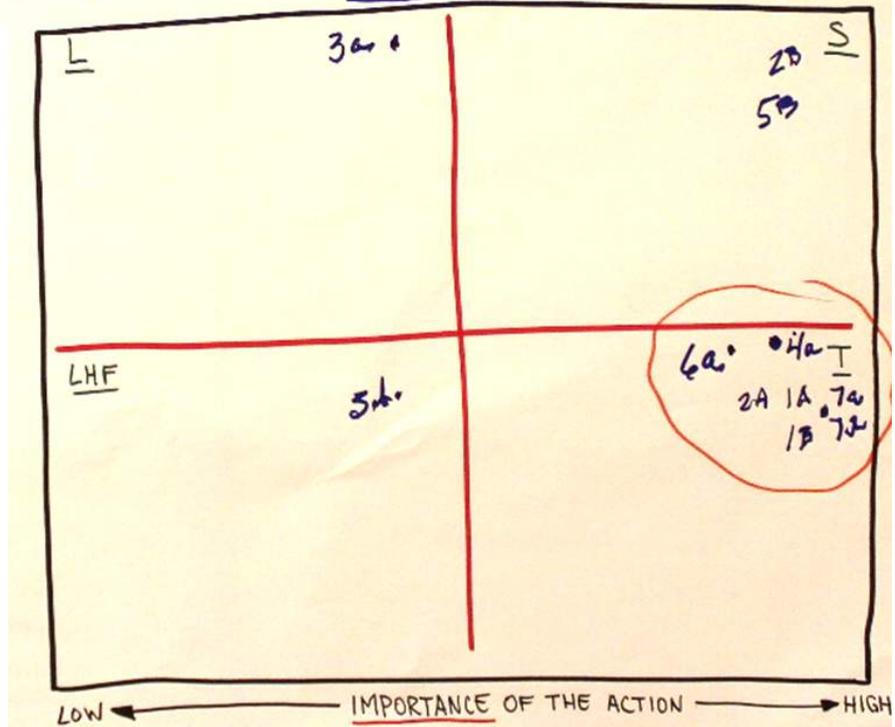
Blue Team Barriers & Actions: Analysis



Barriers

1. Lack of awareness and understanding (Actions 1A & 1B)
2. Training standards (Actions 2A & 2B)
3. Policies, regulations & guidelines (Actions 2A & 2B)
4. Shortage of dogs (Action 4A)
5. **Financial** (Actions 5A & 5B)
6. **Collaboration** among interested parties (Action 6A)
7. **Lack of acceptance that PTS Service Dogs** make a difference (Actions 1B, 7A, & 7B)
8. **Clinical guidelines** (Actions 1A, 1B & 7A)

MOVING AHEAD



Key Actions

- 1A. Informed research
- 1B. Public education program
- 2A. Set standards
- 2B. Screening, placement, and follow-up
- 3A. Reduce fraud
- 4A. Place dogs where they are needed
- 5A. Legislation
- 5B. VA acknowledge the practice
- 6A. More meetings among interested parties
- 7A. Coordinate research
- 7B. Government relations

Synthesized Results

Synthesizing the results of each work group indicates participants believed the following barriers to access were the most impactful and pervasive:

- Lack of training standards
- Cost to obtain, sustain and replace dog
- Inadequate policies, regulations and guidelines
- Lack of awareness and understanding
- Shortage of dogs
- Lack of clinical guidelines

Of note, two working groups listed ‘training standards’ as the most impactful and most pervasive barrier which confirmed the need for a national standard (one of the project’s objectives). To address these barriers, work groups suggested the following actions:

Barrier: Lack of training standards				
Action s	Standardized service dog production process	National standards to train, certify & credential	Standardized placement standards & process	Build on/utilize existing standards
	Common location for standards (i.e., website)		Screening, placement & follow-up	
Barrier: Cost to obtain, sustain and replace dog				
Action s	User onboarding: improved timing & conversation	Federal funding	Form funding coalitions: fed \$/public & private/life-cycle	Legislation
	VA acknowledge the practice			
Barrier: Policies, regulations and guidelines				
Action s	Establish eligibility criteria (scales & alternatives)	Amend laws/regs to better achieve the project’s goals	Federal funding	Close ADA loopholes
	Consistency in legislation between orgs (FHA, VA, etc.)		Screening, placement, and follow-up	Set standards
Barrier: Lack of awareness and understanding				
Actions	National awareness campaign	Commission a targeted research campaign	Joint task force of decision makers	
Barrier: Shortage of dogs				
Action s	Campaign to recruit & train the dog trainers & dogs	Develop a pipeline econometric tool: supply & demand	Improved dog predictor tool: genetics, best practices	Federal funding
	More qualified trainers		Place dogs where they are needed	
Barrier: Lack of clinical guidelines				
Actions	Informed, coordinated research		Public education program	

Table 1. Prioritized barriers and proposed action Items

With these thoughts in mind, work groups were asked to prioritize actions based on the action's importance to the project's goals and its difficulty to implement. By doing so, groups put actions into four categories: luxury (low importance, high difficulty), low hanging fruit (low importance, low difficulty), target (high importance, low difficulty) and strategic (high importance, high difficulty).

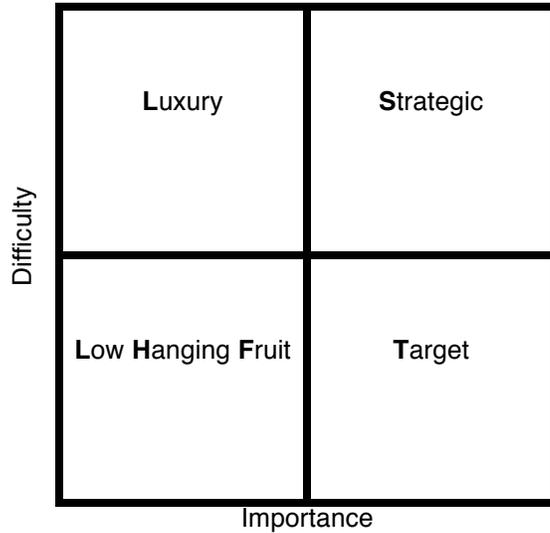


Diagram 3. Action items prioritization matrix

Work groups prioritized actions as found in Chart 3 below and in Table 2 on the following page.

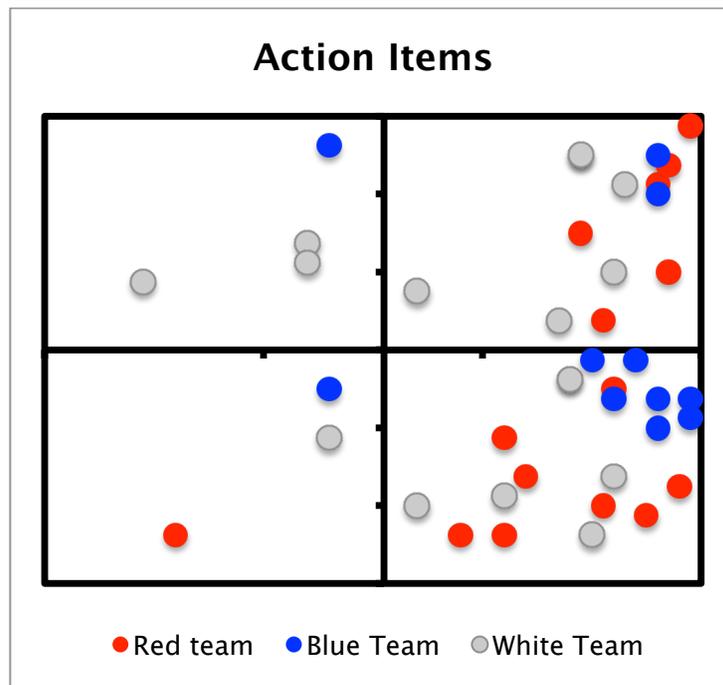


Chart 3. Consolidated work group action items

Action	Luxury	Low Hanging Fruit	Target	Strategic
Close ADA loopholes	1			
Consistency in legislation [regulations] between orgs (FHA, VA, etc.)	1			
Annual conference of key stakeholders	1			1
Reduce fraud	1			
Legislation		1		
Third Party Entity to synchronize and enforce		1	1	1
Form funding coalitions: fed \$/public & private/life-cycle			1	
Program to ensure clinicians are culturally competent			1	
Develop a pipeline econometric tool: supply & demand			1	
Standard certification & aftercare program: user & dog			1	
User onboarding: improved timing & conversation			1	
Standardized initial assessment & counseling			1	
VA acknowledge the practice			1	
Screening, placement, and follow-up			1	
Common location for standards (i.e., website)			1	
Campaign to recruit & train the dog trainers & dogs			1	1
Commission a targeted research campaign			1	2
National awareness/education campaign – all sectors			1	3
Develop National Performance standards			1	3
Funding - including federal			1	1
Standardized service dog production process				1
Standardized placement standards & process				1
Establish eligibility criteria (scales & alternatives)				1
Amend laws/regs to better achieve the project's goals				1
Place dogs where they are needed [most]				1
Joint task force of decision makers				1

Table 2. Action items

Numbers in the four right columns of Table 2 indicate the number of groups placing that action item into that quadrant. Note: some groups placed action items in different quadrants resulting in one action item appearing in multiple quadrants.

Depicting the action items in the above manner yields a few early observations. First, work groups, despite their varied membership, developed similar recommendations and similarly prioritized action items (the obvious exception is the “annual conference” action item which one group listed as a luxury item while another group listed it as a strategic item).

Second, while groups prioritize the need for a “third party” entity, the groups varied greatly in which quadrant was most appropriate for the action.

Third, several action items potentially overlap. For example, “close ADA loopholes”, improving “consistency in legislation [regulations]” at different federal entities and “amending laws” may only require one legislative action or may require several parallel actions to ensure a consistent application of changes to meet desired end goals.

Note: due to similarities in terminology for action items, like items were consolidated where deemed appropriate resulting in totals exceeding the number of working groups. For example, the need for a “national campaign” appeared using a variety of phraseology four times across three groups.

National Standards

During the last session of the day, work groups were tasked to define elements and criteria relating to training, certifying and credentialing PTS service dogs.

Training Standards		
Element	Criteria	Discussion
Control	Basic commands, housebroken, verbal & leash, public access	Not leash dependent
Tasks	Train to meet user's specific needs, minimum of three, appropriate to the user's conditions	
Hours	Set minimum hours including portions in public	Perform to standard, not to time; also set continuation training standards throughout service life
Trainer	Higher expectation of competency for PTS-related tasks	Include owner-trained options that meet certification and performance standards
User	Ensure user understands how to best use the dog	Ability to recognize dog is performing a PTS-related task
Certification Standards		
Evaluator	Competent certified evaluator	Interlocked standards & certifications; certifier should not be the dog's primary trainer
Evaluation	Test for control, tasks and validate hours	Certify to standard; could use a tiered certification model to show dog's progression to higher level tasks
Documentation	Completed by evaluator	Copy provided to owner and copy sent to registry
Dog v. Team	Certify the dog AND certify the team (owner and dog) to ensure effective pairing	
Credentialing Standards		
Registry	Standardized	No cost to user
Identification	ID, vest, chip	ID includes photo of dog and user; hard to forge; web-based backup; requires renewal process
Education	ID awareness	Incorporate ID recognition into education campaign

Table 3. National standards elements and criteria

Recommendations and Next Steps

As described earlier, the top barriers that veterans in need of a PTS service dog face are:

- Lack of training standards
- Cost to obtain, sustain and replace dog
- Inadequate policies, regulations and guidelines
- Lack of awareness and understanding
- Shortage of dogs
- Lack of clinical guidelines

Addressing the lack of training standards was listed as the top priority for the majority of participants. Although other barriers remain, this serves as a logical place to begin to address the issues that veterans with PTS service dogs face. Based on the input garnered from convening participants and work groups, American Humane's Lois Pope LIFE Center for Military Affairs feels confidently equipped to work with stakeholders to take the first steps in driving change in this arena. Together, we will develop and refine solutions that will meet the goal of developing national training standards for PTS service dogs for veterans.

Step 1: Developing the Standards

Key participants from the convening will be invited to join American Humane's PTS Service Dog Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and be charged with drafting standards to ensure the welfare and well-being of PTS service dogs and their military veteran handlers.

Components may include standards for dog selection, dog training, human health assessment, dog trainer qualifications, matching of dog and veteran, training of veteran, and ongoing dog training and care standards. The SAC will also be responsible for helping design the testing of the standards. This group will be divided into specialized subcommittees as noted below.

- Policy/Legal/Government Subcommittee
- Human Services/Evaluation Subcommittee
- Service Dog Trainers Subcommittee
- Veterinarians/Behaviorists/Ethicists Subcommittee
- Oversight/Steering Subcommittee

The SAC's first task will be to discuss our approach to standards development, select leaders of subcommittees and agree upon timelines. Subcommittees will hold regular calls as necessary with draft recommendations to be presented to the larger SAC by the end of the year. Further honing and editing of the work will take place from Jan-Feb

2017, with an in-person meeting of oversight committee members and subcommittee heads to review a final draft of standards tentatively scheduled for March 2017.

Note: In accordance with the recent VA announcement, PTS service dogs will be referred to as Mental Health Mobility Service Dogs (MHMSD) for this effort to make them eligible for medical reimbursement within the VA's current medical coding system. For consumer-facing communication, they will be referred to as PTS service dogs for public understanding.

Step 2: Establishing a Network of Canine Evaluators on the American Humane Standards

The SAC's standards will include the credentials, qualifications and experience required for a person to assess or evaluate a MHMSD. As such, American Humane will develop training curriculum specifically for MHMSD evaluators. Dog trainers who successfully complete the training and evaluation process will receive certification as an American Humane MHMSD evaluator and will be required to renew annually.

The long-term goal is to have a nationwide network of American Humane MHMSD evaluators, similar to the AKC's Canine Good Citizen evaluators. However, initially American Humane will hire 4-5 regional contractors who will serve as our MHMSD evaluators. These contractors will be responsible for soliciting, evaluating and tracking veterans who want to have their MHMSD dog evaluated and credentialed.

Step 3: Getting Veterans Credentialed

Once a veteran and his/her MHMSD have successfully passed the American Humane evaluation, the evaluator will provide them with a certificate of evaluation. The veteran will then assemble the following documentation:

- Dog's proof of vaccination
- American Humane certificate of evaluation
- Documentation of PTS diagnosis from a mental health provider

American Humane is working collaboratively with partners on options to develop a national registry that will issue standardized credentials for veterans.

Step 4: Building Awareness

American Humane will work with convening participants and others to build a public awareness campaign to make veterans aware of this credentialing process, including what steps to take and how it will aid them with public access.

As we learned through the convening, the lack of training standards and universal credentialing for PTS service dogs is just one of the barriers identified and the four steps outlined above are just some of the solutions needed. American Humane looks forward to continuing to collaborate with convening participants and all interested stakeholders to develop broad, long-term solutions to address all barriers that our nation's veterans face in the utilization of PTS service dogs.

For any questions or comments regarding these findings, please contact Dr. Amy McCullough, National Director of Humane Research and Therapy for American Humane at amym@americanhumane.org.

