

Service Dogs Help Vets Cope with PTSD

Specially trained pups providing care to PTSD Vets

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of the most common disabling conditions amongst U.S. war veterans today. Researchers and doctors are constantly looking for new ways to treat this condition. The latest findings from a study of several veterans diagnosed with severe PTSD show that relief can come in the form of man's best friend.

Many veterans who suffer from PTSD experience nightmares, paranoia, mood swings, hypervigilance, and anxiety which can make it difficult for them to lead normal lives. PTSD symptoms can be so severe that many vets are unwilling to leave their homes. In cases such as these, specially trained service dogs have shown to calm anxiety and provide an extra level of security to otherwise paranoid veterans.

One such case is that of Staff Sergeant Brad Fasnacht who was severely wounded by an improvised explosive device (IED) last year. He suffered a traumatic brain injury and broke his spine and both his ankles all of which exacerbated his PTSD. After months of therapy, he was able to walk again, but his PTSD went untreated until the arrival of Sapper, an Australian cattle dog mix.

Sapper is Fasnacht's constant companion whenever he leaves his Silver Spring, MD apartment. After his 3 combat tours left him paranoid and weary of crowds, Sapper provided an extra sense of protection.



Getting Dogs to Veterans

Many non-profit organizations are helping to connect veterans with service dogs. The VA is also working to pair 200 veterans with pups trained and certified by Assistance Dogs International (ADI), which will allow the service dog's owner to bring them into public areas that would normally prohibit the presence of uncertified animals

The Justice Department recently modified the Americans with Disabilities Act to allow for non-ADI trained dogs to also qualify for service animal status, which may help low income veterans to obtain service dogs which can cost thousands of dollars to train.

Many training services like Paws and Stripes train their dogs to perform PTSD-specific tasks such as room searches and corner checks before their owner enters a new area. Canine confirmation of the safety of an area helps many PTSD sufferers feel more at ease about traveling outside their homes.

A VA Disability Attorney Can Help

If you are a veteran who suffers from PTSD as a result of your time in the service, you should contact a VA disability attorney at The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. We can help you determine your eligibility and file the necessary paperwork correctly and in a timely manner.

Our firm has helped thousands of veterans obtain a just disability rating for their condition(s) so they can get the medical and financial help they deserve.

To learn more about the VA disability claims process and your options, [request a complimentary copy of our ebook](#), *Don't Panic: Win Your VA Disability Claim*. To schedule a no cost case evaluation, [contact us today](#) – 1-888-234-5758.

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Coding Disability Claims To Change

Medical coding system switching to new standard

After 10 years of minor repairs and enhancements to the medical coding system used to classify disabling conditions, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has decided to reformat the system completely.

Mirroring the ICD-10 Standards

To help facilitate communication between the various parts of a Social Security disability application the SSA has adopted the coding system developed by the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision (ICD-10). While the old system used by the SSA used a 4-digit code to note a disabling condition, the ICD-10 uses codes that may be 10-digits long to describe a disease or medical condition.

The standards are already in use by doctors and hospitals across the nation and they will begin compliance with the new system along with federal agencies dealing with disability claims. The SSA hopes to have the system completely switched over by October 2013.

Decreasing Coding Errors

Since the SSA began improving and enhancing the existing medical coding system they have seen a 45% decrease in coding errors. Prior to the fixes, as many as 5.5% of disabled benefit recipients had coding errors in their files which were either missing, invalid, or unestablished.

While the number of errors has decreased in the past 10 years, the SSA hopes that the new IDC-10 system will create a common language between medical professionals and federal agencies to eliminate the coding errors that can cause claims to be wrongfully denied or delayed.

Partnering with the Department of Health

To help create a widespread standard for federal agencies that deal with health-related issues, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is also working to complete the switch to the IDC-10 system.

Three of the sections of a disability claim - the Disability Control File, Supplemental Security Record, and Master Beneficiary Record – all rely on the medical codes to interface correctly. Because these files are developed through various sources having a uniform code system will hopefully increase the expedition of the information as well as decrease the potential for errors.

However, the Department of Health is reluctant at pushing for the October 2013 deadline due to its current high rate of accuracy. They are still considering the switch and effect of redirecting their resources to the task.

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

As we close out the 2010 year and winter holidays The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg would like to share some pictures from our office holiday party!

The event took place at the Las Olas Grand guesthouse and started with appetizers and dinner. Our quarterly meeting was held, focusing on identifying the achievements of our departments. Awards were given for categories such as most improved leads and professionalism. The evening closed out with a raffle event giving away 18 prizes ranging from spa gift certificates to concert tickets!

2010 was a wonderful year at The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg and we wish you and your family a safe and healthy New Year!



Group shot (top), Tracking & Claims depts. (bottom)



An experienced Social Security disability attorney from the Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg can be a valuable extra pair of eyes when it comes to reviewing your disability claim when applying for Social Security disability benefits. Avoid common mistakes by obtaining the assistance of an experienced disability attorney.

Let an attorney from LaVan & Neidenberg help bring a resolution to your Social Security disability benefits claim. To schedule a no cost case evaluation, [contact us today](mailto:info@lavanneidenberg.com) – 1-888-234-5758.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Everyone at the Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg wishes you and yours a happy and healthy holiday season! We hope that 2011 is an even better year than 2010 was for all!

NEW YEAR'S DAY – SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2011

The start of the New Year finds many businesses and all government offices closed. This is typically a day of relaxation following the celebration of the New Year the night prior. Many make New Year's resolutions to improve parts of their life in the upcoming months.

In the spirit of the New Year, The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg would like to invite you to send in your New Year's resolution, along with the name of a friend or family member who could use our services. Please email your entries (and photos when appropriate) to contests@disabilitylawclaims.com by January 20th. The most original resolution will be featured in our January newsletter!

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY – MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2011

In recognition of the birthday of famous civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. this federal holiday is often a day off from public schools and some non-essential government offices may be closed. Some businesses also close on this day, as it is seen as a holiday to promote service to your local community.

JANUARY IS NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH

January is a month of new beginnings and what better way to celebrate the New Year than to take up a new hobby? There are many types of hobbies you can become involved in no matter how your disability affects your life. Computers have allowed those with limited mobility to participate in long-distance competitive games such as chess or Scrabble without traveling to another's house. Community centers provide several opportunities for low-impact hobbies such as knitting clubs, gardening, and craft seminars.

SIGN OUR PETITION FOR FREE MEDICAL RECORDS!

LaVan & Neidenberg is sponsoring a petition to change medical records fees in the State of Florida. Currently, patients are required to pay up to \$1 per page to obtain a copy of their own medical records. The Firm's legislative initiative proposes to **make medical records FREE for all individuals applying for disability benefits.**

Please join us in our fight and [sign our petition](#) today! Thank you for your support!

Child Disability Claims Suspicious

Congressman fears many child disability claims overhyped to gain benefits.

A Massachusetts state representative is calling for a congressional hearing to discuss the potential abuse of Social Security disability benefits among children and teens.

Poor Follow-up on Child Disability Claims

One of the complaints about the current child disability system is that if a child is diagnosed at an early age with a disability and approved for benefits there is usually little to no follow-up as they age.

In many cases, claimants are evaluated at the time of application and then never reviewed again until they reach adulthood when program requirements may change. This allows many benefit recipients to continue to receive their Social Security disability checks each month although their disabling condition is no longer affecting them.

Benefit Abuse Could Be Harming Children

Congressman Richard E. Neal of Springfield, MD is spearheading the request for review of current procedures for approving and evaluating childhood disability benefits. His fear is that in many cases, children are being over diagnosed and medicated in order to qualify for disability benefits.

One of the most common disabilities that allow many children to qualify for disability benefits is ADHD which is often treated by medication. The congressional hearing is seeking to review the potential that many low-income families are obtaining over-diagnosis of this condition and obtaining unnecessary medication to qualify their children for disability.

In a weakened economy where many families are facing foreclosure, reduced income, or unemployment, many turn to disability benefits as a potential lifeline to provide for their needs. While there are thousands of truly disabled children, these legitimate cases may soon be under scrutiny if the system is reviewed for potential abuse.

At the Law Offices of LaVan and Neidenberg we help legitimately disabled claimants apply for and obtain the benefits they deserve. For a no-cost review of your claim, request a copy of our [free disability claim guide](#).

Or, [contact us today](#) to have a Social Security disability attorney review your claim – 1-888-234-5758.