

Section C. Statement of Work- Procurement of Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs for the PTSD/SD Research Project

Note: This requirement is issued under the authority of Section 1077 of U.S. Public Law 111-84 (the Act).

1.0 Background. The Act authorizes appropriations for VA to conduct a pilot study on the use of service dogs for the treatment and/or rehabilitation of Veterans with physical or mental injuries or disabilities. For a variety of reasons (detailed in the Final Rule Summary, released September 5, 2012), VA decided to limit the scope of this study to Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Accordingly, this study will be termed the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder/Service Dog (PTSD/SD) study throughout the rest of this contract document. For orientation, it is important to distinguish the requirements for service dogs for the PTSD/SD study contained herein versus VA medical benefits for service dogs contained in 38 CFR Section 17.148 (§17.148) and recently described in the September 5, 2012 *Federal Register* (Final Rule). The congressional mandate includes numerous research study requirements that must be adhered to in order for any Contractor to be eligible for a contract award:

1.0.1 The VA is required to contract with only 501(c) (3) organizations (“Contractors”), and for those organizations to adhere to standards comparable with existing accreditation standards.

1.0.2 The VA will provide compensation of \$10,000 for the procurement of each service dog in the study. There is no similar stipulation for emotional support dogs also needed for the study. Additionally, the VA is authorized to reimburse a Contractor for additional reasonable costs such as training, food, housing, and veterinary care prior to pairing (service dogs) or placement (emotional support dogs).

1.0.3 The Act states that the study must include a population of approximately 200 Veterans, which is needed in order to produce scientifically valid results with respect to assessing the benefits and costs of the use of the dogs in the study. A thorough market analysis indicates that between 150 and 220 Veterans are needed in order to provide appropriate statistical analytics in order to answer study objectives. Therefore, at least 150-220 dogs are expected to be needed as part of the contract requirements over the life of the contract.

1.0.4 At completion of the study, and if agreeable to the Veteran, the ownership of the study dog will transfer to the Veteran; otherwise, the ownership will transfer back to the Contractor, and the Contractor will become responsible for the dog. If any Veteran elects to not keep a dog, it will be returned to the Contractor unless VA determines that it would be unethical for humane or public safety reasons to do so.

1.0.5 The VA study will evaluate the potential benefit of both service dogs and emotional support dogs to Veterans with a diagnosis of PTSD. There are important distinctions between service and emotional support dogs, which potential Contractors must be able to adhere to. These distinctions are further defined in item 1.5 and elsewhere below.

1.1 This PTSD/SD study is distinct from VA benefits currently provided to eligible Veterans [§17.148(b)(1)] who can receive service dog benefits due to visual, hearing, or substantial mobility impairment. It is very likely that various stakeholders will confuse the medical benefits provided by VA for

some service dogs with this study, which utilizes service dogs, and it is likely that Contractors will receive phone calls and queries that confuse the two. There are currently two fundamental differences- a) in contrast to the study, VA does not purchase service dogs as part of the medical benefit program, and b) the medical benefit program does not cover dogs for veterans on the basis of a mental health diagnosis (eg PTSD) alone. More details of these differences are provided below.

1.1.1 Regarding existing VA service dog benefits, the VA clinical team treating the Veteran for eligible impairments determines if the use of a service dog is optimal for the Veteran to manage the impairment and live independently, according to the criteria in §17.148. VA has never purchased service dogs as a benefit under §17.148, but does provide wellness and veterinary medical insurance for such dogs ((§17.148(d) (1)).

1.1.2 Regarding the PTSD/SD study, VA will be purchasing dogs for Veterans who enroll in the study, and will be providing wellness and veterinary health insurance for the duration of the time the Veteran is enrolled in the study. Veterans in the study will receive a monthly stipend to defray the cost of food and incidentals, and VA will reimburse any additional veterinary costs. After the Veteran completes the study, VA's responsibility for the dog ends (§1077(c) (7)). At that time, the Veteran will be given the option of ownership of the dog. Per §1077(c) (7),

“At the end of the study the Veteran will have the option of ownership of the dog. If the Veteran does not wish to retain the dog, the 501(c) (3) organization that provided the dog will be responsible for caring for or appropriately placing the dog.” “From a practical standpoint, at the request of VA, the 501(c) (3) organization must be willing to voluntarily accept ownership/possession of the dog back at no additional cost to the VA.”

1.2 At this time, benefits for a service dog described in §17.148 are not provided to mitigate the effects of a mental illness.

1.2.1 Regarding existing VA service dog benefits, in explaining its decision in the September 5, 2012 *Federal Register*, VA stated in the Final Rule that it was unaware of accepted training protocols for mental health service dogs, or how assistance from such dogs could be consistently helpful for Veterans to mitigate mental health impairments. The dogs procured via this contract will be used in the PTSD/SD study to help determine if service dogs are indeed an effective treatment for Veterans diagnosed with PTSD. The results are expected to inform future VA service dog benefits deliberations. This is the only connection between the PTSD/SD study and VA service dog benefits described in §17.148.

1.2.2 Regarding the PTSD/SD study, Veterans diagnosed with PTSD will be eligible for enrollment if they meet criteria established by the VA study team. VA and Contractors will work together to ensure that Veterans meet Contractor handler eligibility criteria.

1.3 VA will purchase both service dogs and emotional support dogs for Veteran PTSD/SD participants via this procurement.

As mentioned previously, VA is purchasing service dogs to conduct the PTSD/SD study. This is in contrast to VA policy on service dog benefits (§17.148(d) (4)), which states that VA will never take responsibility for or take possession of a service dog.

1.4 Enrollment by a Veteran in the PTSD/SD study has no bearing on whether the Veteran will be eligible for future benefits described in §17.148 after their participation in the study ends. As stated in the Final Rule section entitled “The Exclusion of Benefits for Mental Health Service Dogs is Not Unreasonable”, the purpose of this PTSD/SD study is to provide scientific evidence whether service dogs are effective therapy for Veterans with PTSD. The results of this study will then inform future VA decisions on whether service dog benefits should be extended to Veterans with a primary mental health diagnosis. Accordingly, it is critically important that this study be done according to the highest scientific standards in partnership with respected organizations capable of providing healthy, well-trained service dogs and emotional support dogs.

1.5 Service Dogs versus Emotional Support Dogs. The VA study will evaluate the potential benefit of both service dogs and emotional support dogs to Veterans with a diagnosis of PTSD. There are important differences between the two categories of dogs.

1.5.1 The US Department of Justice (DoJ), Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section provides guidance regarding **service dogs**:

- a. Beginning on March 15, 2011, only dogs are recognized as service animals under Titles II and III of the ADA.
- b. A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability that mitigates that disability.
- c. Generally, Title II and Title III entities must permit service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas where members of the public are allowed to go.

The important characteristic of a service dog is that it has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, opening a door for someone in a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, providing a physical barrier in a crowd for a person with PTSD. Service dogs are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

1.5.2 **An emotional support animal** is a U.S. DoJ term for a pet which provides therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship and affection. Emotional support animals are not specially trained to ameliorate disability. In this research study, we will be using dogs as emotional support animals, they

are essentially a companion dog (pet dog). For the purpose of this study, an emotional support dog may be (but is not limited to) a candidate service dog that lacks the drive, work ethic, or focus to continue training as service dog. The physical and behavioral requirements specified for service dogs and emotional support dogs are the same, except where specifically noted. In the U.S., two federal laws grant special rights to some owners of emotional support animals:

- a. Fair Housing Act – establishes a procedure for modifying "no pets" policies in most types of housing to permit a person with a disability to keep an animal for emotional support. In housing that allows pets but charges supplemental rent or deposits for them, these fees must be waived. The dog's owner can be charged for actual damage done by the animal, but cannot not be required to pay a fee or a security deposit in order to keep the animal.
- b. Air Carrier Access Act of 1986 - establishes a procedure for modifying pet policies on aircraft to permit a person with a disability to travel with a prescribed emotional support animal so long as they have appropriate documentation and the animal is not a danger to others and does not interfere with others (through unwanted attention, barking, inappropriate toileting, etc.). The Act prohibits discrimination in air transportation by domestic and foreign air carriers against qualified individuals with physical or mental impairments. It applies only to air carriers that provide regularly scheduled services for hire to the public. The following summary table is based upon information from *California's Protection & Advocacy System* website:

Accommodation	Service Dog	Emotional Support Dog
	Animal that is individually trained to perform work or tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability	Animal that provides comfort or support for a person with a disability, but does not have any individualized training to perform work or tasks.
Reasonable Accommodation in Housing?	Yes. Housing provider may ask for documentation that owner has a disability and there is a disability-related need for a service animal.	Yes. Housing provider may ask for documentation that owner has a disability and there is a disability-related need for an emotional support animal.
Reasonable Accommodation in Places of Public Accommodation and Public Entities?	Yes. Public accommodations and public entities may not ask for documentation, but can ask if the animal is a service animal and what it is trained to do.	No.
Reasonable Accommodation for airline travel?	Yes. Airline may ask whether the animal is a service animal and what it is trained to do.	Yes. Airline may ask for a signed note from a licensed mental health professional, not more than 1 year old, that states that owner has a psychiatric disability and a disability-related need for an emotional support animal.

2. Selected VA responsibilities and rights related to service dogs and emotional support dogs purchased under this procurement for the PTSD/SD study.

2.1 VA will provide commercial veterinary health and wellness policies for each service dog and emotional support dog purchased for the duration of time each Veteran remains in the study. The policies will commence when VA proofs and accepts the dog before the Veteran receives the dog and end when the Veteran has completed their participation in the study. VA will be the sole owner of all such policies, and will have unrestricted access to medical and billing records related to these policies. VA agrees to share medical information on dogs when requested by the Contractor.

2.2 VA will provide trained mental health staff to provide care as needed to Veterans enrolled in the study. Contractors will not provide medical or mental health care to any Veteran enrolled in the PTSD/SD study.

2.3 VA study staff will interact with study Veterans to collect data. Contractor staff will not be responsible for any experimental data collection.

2.4 VA research team will screen Veterans to make sure they fit the PTSD/SD study enrollment criteria and are able to learn and reinforce essential dog commands to help ensure a successful pairing. Veterans will be cautioned that they must meet the criteria developed by the VA with Contractor input to receive a dog; however, the study team will pre-screen all study patients.

2.5 VA has the right to make unannounced site visits to Contractor property any time during normal business hours of 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday local time (federal holidays excluded) to ensure training methods, handling of dogs, veterinary care, and facilities are appropriate. Health care and training records for dogs purchased by VA or destined to be paired with Veterans in the study are subject to review at any time upon request by the Contracting Officer or Contracting Officer's Representative (COR).

2.6 VA will provide an overview of PTSD signs and symptoms to the Contractors and their staff. All Contractor staff who will be working with study Veterans will be required to attend this session or another session approved by VA.

2.7 VA will provide an overview of the study. All Contractor staff who will be working on the study will be required to attend this session or another session approved by the VA.

2.8 VA trainers will interact with the Contractors during preparation for initial pairing. To ensure that candidate Veterans will be eligible to receive a dog from a Contractor, VA trainers will interact with and consult with Contractor staff prior to pairing of service dogs.

3. Ownership of service dogs and emotional support dogs purchased under this procurement. Upon acceptance of a service dog or emotional support dog, VA becomes the sole owner of the dog during the time the Veteran is enrolled in the PTSD/SD study. This right of ownership supersedes any and all agreements that may be in place between a Contractor and the Veteran receiving the service dog or emotional support dog.

3.1 If the Veteran chooses not to keep a dog after pairing (service dog) or placement (emotional support dog) but before the end of the Veteran's participation in the study, for reasons unrelated to dog disqualifying health or behavior problems (see section 12.1 for the definition of disqualifying health and behavior problems):

3.1.1 Service dogs will be returned to the Contractor which supplied the dog, at VA expense. The Contractor will be responsible for making transportation arrangements to return the dog back to the Contractor's property, reimbursable at the rate set by CLINs 0008-4008.

3.1.1.1 If VA determines that it can use the dog for pairing with another Veteran for the study, the Contractor shall work with VA to re-pair the dog with a new Veteran. In this case, re-pairing costs

will be payable by the VA, not to exceed 25% of the rates for CLINs 0002-4002, 0005-4005, 0006-4006, and 0007-4007 combined.

3.1.1.2 If VA determines that it does not need the dog for pairing with another Veteran for the study, VA will transfer ownership to the Contractor. No refund will be due VA in such as case.

3.1.2 Emotional support dogs will be kenneled by VA until placed with another Veteran unless VA no longer needs the dog for the study, in which case the dog will be returned to the Contractor which supplied the dog at VA expense. The Contractor will be responsible for making transportation arrangements to return the dog back to the Contractor's property, reimbursable at the rate set by CLINs 0008-4008.

3.2 If the Veteran chooses to keep the dog at the end of the study period,

3.2.1 VA will transfer ownership of the dog to the Veteran;

3.2.2 The Veteran will be responsible for all expenses related to the care and feeding of the dog after their enrollment in the study is complete;

3.2.3 VA's legal and financial liability for the dog shall cease.

3.3 If VA removes a service dog or an emotional support dog from a Veteran after pairing/placement due to mistreatment of the dog, because the Veteran is unable to care properly for the dog, or because VA no longer deems the Veteran's living arrangements or environment to be adequate to keep or care for a dog, the following conditions apply (note: the Contractor that supplied the dog will be consulted, but VA will make the final determination on whether to remove the dog):

3.3.1 Service dogs de-paired per this paragraph will be returned to the Contractor which supplied the dog, at VA expense. The Contractor will be responsible for making transportation arrangements to return the dog back to the Contractor's property, reimbursable at the rate set by CLINs 0008-4008.

3.3.1.1 If VA determines that it can use the dog for pairing with another Veteran for the study, the Contractor shall work with VA to re-pair the dog with a new Veteran. In this case, re-pairing costs will be payable by the VA, not to exceed 25% of the rates for CLINs 0002-4002, 0005-4005, 0006-4006, and 0007-4007 combined.

3.1.2 If VA determines that it does not need the dog for pairing with another Veteran for the study, VA will transfer ownership to the Contractor. No refund will be due VA in such as case.

3.3.2 Emotional support dogs will be kenneled by VA until placed with another Veteran unless VA no longer needs the dog for the study, in which case the dog will be returned to the Contractor which supplied the dog at VA expense. The Contractor will be responsible for making transportation arrangements to return the dog back to the Contractor's property, reimbursable at the rate set by CLINs 0008-4008.

3.4 At any time after pairing (service dog) or placing (emotional support dog) and prior to the Veteran completing the study, if VA decides to return a dog to the Contractor because the dog has developed disqualifying health or behavioral problems that prevent it from functioning properly as a service dog or as an emotional support dog:

3.4.1 VA will be due a refund from the Contractor on the complete cost paid for a dog. VA will pay for transportation back to the Contractor, but the Contractor will be responsible for making transportation

arrangements to return the dog back to the Contractor's property, reimbursable at the rate set by CLINs 0008-4008.

3.4.2 If the Contractor can provide another dog quickly enough to meet study needs the Contractor may provide, if VA agrees, a fully trained replacement dog that meets the health and behavioral requirements in this contract in lieu of a refund.

3.4.3 VA will consider information provided by a Contractor in its decision, but VA retains sole contract rights to determine whether a dog will be returned.

3.5 At its sole discretion, VA retains the right to remove a service dog or emotional support dog from a Veteran if the Veteran does not remain enrolled in the study or does not meet study participation requirements.

3.5.1 Service dogs de-paired per this paragraph will be returned to the Contractor which supplied the dog, at VA expense. The Contractor will be responsible for making transportation arrangements to return the dog back to the Contractor's property, reimbursable at the rate set by CLINs 0008-4008.

3.5.1.1 If VA determines that it can use the dog for pairing with another Veteran for the study, the Contractor shall work with VA to re-pair the dog with a new Veteran. In this case, re-pairing costs will be payable by the VA, not to exceed 25% of the rates for CLINs 0002-4002, 0005-4005, 0006-4006, and 0007-4007 combined.

3.5.1.2 If VA determines that it does not need the dog for pairing with another Veteran for the study, VA will transfer ownership to the Contractor. No refund will be due VA in such as case.

3.5.2 Emotional support dogs will be kenneled by VA until placed with another Veteran unless VA no longer needs the dog for the study, in which case the dog will be returned to the Contractor which supplied the dog at VA expense. The Contractor will be responsible for making transportation arrangements to return the dog back to the Contractor's property, reimbursable at the rate set by CLINs 0008-4008.

4. Specific Prohibitions. Although VA will consider Contractor input and suggestions, Contractor may not, without specific written approval from the Contracting Officer,

4.1 Remove a dog from a Veteran during the study;

4.2 Threaten a Veteran with removal of the dog.

4.3 Suggest or imply that VA will remove a paired dog.

4.4 Train a dog previously or currently owned by a Veteran or family member to be paired or placed with that Veteran or another Veteran in the study.

4.5 Provide information about the study to outside parties. VA will work with Contractors to develop statements and bullet points that can be communicated.

5. Privacy considerations. Dogs procured will be used in a research study, which is subject to specific and strict laws and regulations regarding the privacy of Veterans enrolled in the study. The privacy of Veterans participating in this study must be diligently protected at all times by the Contractor. VA recognizes that Contractor staff must be aware of general challenges faced by PTSD sufferers and understand the possible symptoms of PTSD to choose a suitable service dog and perform an effective pairing or choose an appropriate emotional support dog to facilitate successful placement, but the following restrictions shall be followed:

5.1 Veterans in the study may not be named, featured, or pictured in any publications, press releases, web pages, text messages, or any other communications, whether verbal, written, or electronic;

5.2 Veterans in the study may not be solicited for donations, loans, or favorable considerations of any type for any Contractor staff. This prohibition includes promotional, monetary, or other requests by the Contractor;

5.3 Veterans in the study may not make personal appearances or be filmed for press or promotional purposes on behalf of the Contractor or Contractor staff members;

5.4 Any and all external requests for information about the study or Veterans participating in the study must be referred immediately to the Contracting Officer. No information about the study may be released to any third party without the written permission of the Contracting Officer;

5.5 Contractors may not provide funds or resources beyond what would normally be provided to any person being paired with a service/emotional support dog;

5.6 Veterans may participate in activities provided equally to all other clients of the Contractor, but the Contractor shall obtain permission from the Contracting Officer in advance for all such activities;

5.7 Restrictions in this section shall remain in place until all Veterans in the study are paired with dogs from any Contractor, complete the entire study period. Thereafter, written permission shall be obtained from Veterans for any activities described above.

5.8 Contractors shall not tell Veterans to lie to or mislead the VA about how a dog is behaving or about the health status of a dog. Veterans shall be instructed to be honest when reporting about their dog to the VA.

5.9 Veterans in study may not donate, work for, or volunteer with Contractor until all Veterans in the study have completed the study.

6. Contact with Veterans will be limited after pairings or placement. Because this is a research study on the benefits of service dogs as well as emotional support dogs and not a study on the type or benefits of service dog Contractor post-pairing/placement support practices, the potential influence of the Contractor on the Veteran shall be minimized after pairing/placement for the duration of the research study.

6.1 Dog trainers hired by VA will be responsible for monitoring the Veterans after pairing/placement and will have primary responsibility for interacting with them after pairing/placement. However, VA trainers will seek guidance from the Contractor as needed should any problems in a pairing /placement arise.

6.2 Upon request, VA will share de-identified (other than the dog's name and microchip number) notes of VA trainer visits and interactions involving pairing/placement issues upon request.

6.3 Contractors must contact a COR or the Contracting Officer if any concerns about a pairing/placement arise.

7. Contractor access to Protected Health Information (PHI) and Individual Identifying Information (III). PHI is any information about health status, provision of health care, or payment for health care that can be linked to a specific individual. This is interpreted broadly to include any part of a patient's medical record or history. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 provide strict limits on how and when such information can be shared. Individual Identifying Information (III) is information that can allow third parties to identify a person if such information is shared. It is similar, but not identical to PHI. By law and policy, VA requires that both PHI and III be protected from unauthorized disclosure.

7.1 Contractors shall not have access to the medical records or have any direct contact with healthcare providers for Veterans enrolled in the study. Contractor staff will be able to ask Veterans questions necessary to choose the most appropriate dog to help ensure the best possible pairing/placement. Information collected by Contractor to aid in determining the most appropriate dog must be collected and stored as a hardcopy document. This collected information is classified as sensitive information and must be protected from improper disclosure.

7.2 To avoid the need for background investigations, Contractor staff will not be allowed to visit the homes or residences of Veterans. VA staff will do a home visit prior to pairing/placement and advise Contractor staff of pertinent information that could affect pairing /placement decisions. VA will consult with Contractor staff to determine the information that needs to be collected to result in a good pairing/placement.

7.3 PHI and III collected and maintained by the Contractor is subject to the following restrictions:

7.3.1 No Veteran PHI or III may be stored on Contractor computers or in electronic records unless the computer system and security safeguards meet the requirements in Department of Veterans Affairs Handbook 6500, "Information Security Program." Electronic records may be maintained using the name of the dog paired/placed with the Veteran, in lieu of Veteran personal identifiers;

7.3.2 Paper records with Veteran PHI or III shall be maintained in a secure location under lock and key, with access only by Contractor personnel who have taken VA privacy training, with annual refresher VA privacy training;

7.3.3 Paper records maintained on Veteran participants may not be mixed together with other similar records- they must be kept separately.

7.4 Veteran contact information, with no reference to any medical information about the individual, may only be stored on password-protected cell phones.

8. Delivery Schedule. Contractors shall be able to provide at least 2 dogs (service dogs and/or emotional support dogs) that meet all contract specifications within 60 calendar days of task order award. All awardees are guaranteed an initial task order totaling at least 6 dogs (either service dogs, emotional support dogs, or a combination of each) during the base year of the contract only. No guarantee amounts will be provided for the Option Years of the contract; rather, follow-on task orders will be issued on a competitive basis amongst all schedule holders. The Government reserves the right to make single or multiple awards, as well as to make awards on an All or None by CLIN basis under this solicitation for the same supplies to two or more sources, but will give preference to making multiple awards to the maximum extent practicable.

The study enrollment for the study is estimated to be about 220 dogs, which would be 110 service dogs and 110 emotional support dogs. An additional 10 service dogs are needed to complete Phase 1 of the study (needed in the base year of the contract). In addition, additional dogs of each type are expected to be needed over option years 3, 4, and 5 as replacements for dogs when no Contractor fault is present, see, e.g. 3.3, 3.5. The total expected need is about 130 service dogs and 120 emotional support dogs.

Follow-On Delivery Order Evaluation Criteria:

Each follow-on delivery order exceeding \$3,000 will be placed on a competitive basis, except as provided for in FAR 16.505(b)(1)(b)(2), e.g., the agency need for the supplies or services is so urgent that providing a fair opportunity would result in unacceptable delays, or it is necessary to place an order to satisfy a minimum guarantee.

The Government will provide a fair notice of the intent to place an order, including a clear description of the services to be delivered to all Contractors under the multiple-award contract; and afford all Contractors responding to the notice a fair opportunity to submit an offer and have that offer fairly considered.

The Government will award orders under this contract to the responsible offeror whose offer will be most advantageous to the Government, price and other factors considered. The following factors listed below will be used to evaluate all follow on delivery orders. These factors are considered of equal importance:

8.1 FACTOR 1, Quality of Dogs Previously Provided on Task Orders Placed under this Respective Contract. The organization's record of the health, training, and suitability of dogs previously provide as part of this contract.

8.2 FACTOR 2, Ability to Provide Dogs to Study when Needed. The organization's ability to provide dogs upon VA's request per SOW item A.8, and any subsequent delivery requests that may be asked for on the follow-on task orders.

8.3 FACTOR 3, Performance in Meeting Other Contract Requirements. This factor includes the organization's record on this contract in:

- a. Providing complete and accurate electronic medical history files for candidate service and emotional support dogs;
- b. Timeliness in providing dates for VA dog trainers to proof candidate dogs;
- c. Timeliness in providing training records for candidate dogs prior to scheduled proofing date;
- d. Success in providing necessary equipment, materials, personnel, and setting for VA personnel to evaluate dog performance of the tasks specified as part of the proofing process;
- e. Ability to comply with contract privacy security requirements;
- f. Cooperating with the VA trainers when they ask for assistance with a dog issue expressed by a Veteran;
- g. Communicating in advance when emotional support dogs will be shipped, the method of shipment, and the number of dogs;
- h. Adherence to VA travel policies in arranging veteran travel;
- i. Quality of assistance provided to Veterans in travel arrangements and during pairings;
- j. Quality of lodging provided to Veterans during service dog pairings.

8.4 FACTOR 4, Proximity of Contractor to VA Study Site (for service dogs only). VA will evaluate this factor based upon the location of the Veterans that need to be paired for the study.

8.5 FACTOR 5, Pricing. Dog pricing will be evaluated for reasonableness. In no event shall the pricing for the follow on delivery orders be in excess of those prices initially proposed in the base contract.

8.6 FACTOR 6, Veteran Involvement. In an effort to achieve socioeconomic small business goals, VA will evaluate offerors based on their service-disabled Veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) or Veteran-owned small business (VOSB) status, and their proposed use of eligible service-disabled Veteran-owned small businesses and Veteran-owned small businesses as subContractors or team members.

Substantiating documents such as teaming agreements must be submitted with the price quotation. To receive credit, an offeror must be registered and verified in VetBiz.gov Contractor Information Pages (<http://www.VetBiz.gov>).

9. Veteran eligibility criteria. VA will pre-screen Veterans to make sure they meet specific criteria for receiving a dog.

9.1 Veterans selected for the study will have to meet the following criteria:

- a. Males and females greater than 18 years of age.
- b. Referral from mental health provider that documents PTSD diagnosis is needed. Must meet all items on referral checklist (anger management; cognitive ability; exclusion of suicidal plan, delusions, psychoses, dementia, and alcohol/substance dependence).
- c. PTSD as a result of any trauma.
- d. PTSD diagnosed by the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (Meets criteria for current criteria for PTSD in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders).
- e. Enrolled in mental health services at VA and has attended at least one visit in the past 90 days prior to consent. Agrees to remain in VA mental health treatment throughout the duration of the study.
- f. Ability to adequately care for a dog (physically and financially). Please note, an individual may have a physical impairment, (e.g., use a wheelchair), but service dogs will not be trained to accommodate for those disabilities. The Veteran must have lived in the home for over six consecutive months and have suitable home environment to provide for a dog. Home environment must be accessible for study staff.
- g. Willing to accept a study randomization outcome, and willing to attend either a training session for potential receipt of Service Dog that lasts two weeks, or receive an emotional support dog and receive instruction from a VA dog trainer.
- h. Has someone to care for dog in the absence of Veteran.
- i. Agreement by others in home to have dog.
- j. Willing and able to travel (by air or car) to training site for pairing (service dogs).
- k. Acceptance by dog Contractors to receive service dog or an emotional support dog.
- l. Subject has no pets (cats, dogs or horses), but wants a dog. A few Veterans in a small sub-part of the study may have pets in the home.
- m. For safety reasons, Veterans who have children younger than age 10, in the household for more than 8 hours per day, one day a week or more will be excluded from the study. After 20 dogs from each Contractor selected have been placed, this exclusion criterion will be revisited after assessing any adverse events.
- n. Able to verbalize understanding of consent form, willingness to complete study questionnaires, and provide written informed consent.

9.2 Veterans will be excluded from participation in the study if they:

- a. Were hospitalized for mental health reasons in the past 6 months.
- b. Have any indication of aggressive behavior that would make it unsafe for dog.
- c. Have a diagnosis of psychoses, delusions, dementia, active alcohol/substance dependence, or moderate to severe traumatic brain injury. Please note, some individuals may have mild brain injury but are able to meet the overall cognitive requirements of the study.
- d. Have an active suicidal or homicidal intent, or cognitive disabilities that would preclude safety of dog and ability to participate in the study.
- e. Have a suicide flag in their VA medical record.
- f. If a site principal investigator identifies a social, mental or physical condition that prevents Veteran from either giving informed consent or participating in the study.
- g. Are participating in another research trial.

h. They have a flag for violent/disruptive behavior in their VA medical record.

9.3 As noted in item 9.1, for safety reasons, Veterans who have children younger than age 10 in the household for more than 8 hours per day, one day a week or more, will be excluded from the study.

9.3.1 After 20 dogs from a Contractor have been received by VA, this exclusion criterion will be revisited by VA after assessing any adverse events.

9.3.2 VA retains sole authority to determine whether dogs from a particular Contractor may be placed with a Veteran who has children in the home.

10. Contract Type and Period of Performance. The VA intends to award an Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) type long-term contract, and reserves the right to make multiple awards as a result of the solicitation issuance. This contract shall consist of one (1) base year, plus four (4) one year option periods. As stated above, each awardee that receives a contract will be given a minimum guarantee of 6 dogs during the base year of the contract only. No additional guarantees shall be given for the option periods. The total ceiling is 400 dogs over the life of the contract.

The period of performance is at the commencement of the base year of the contract as indicated in the price/cost schedule, thru one year. The same period of performance applies if the Contracting Officer has exercised an option under the contract (i.e.: commencement of the option thru one year.) If work is required at a government site it shall not take place on Federal holidays or weekends unless directed by the Contracting Officer. The following Federal Holidays are observed: New Year's Day; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Day; Presidents Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veterans Day; Thanksgiving Day; Christmas Day.

11. Specific Contract Tasks and Associated Deliverables.

11.1 Task #1, Project Management Plan.

11.1.1 **Task Description.** Contractor will provide a detailed Project Management Plan (PMP) and briefing for the VA.

11.1.2 **Deliverable #1A:** Shall consist of submission of the written, detailed PMP within 30 calendar days of contract award. The PMP shall include the following components:

11.1.2.1 Key personnel – any changes in key personnel must be approved in advance by the CO or COR. Replacement personnel should have equivalent training and experience or better.

11.1.2.2 Procedures to ensure compliance with privacy and protected health information and individual identifying information protection requirements in the contract.

11.1.2.3 Quality assurance procedures for ensuring healthy, well-trained dogs that meet contract requirements in Section 12, Dog Health and Behavioral Standards for Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs, below.

11.1.2.4 How veterinary medical care will be provided and how parasite control/zoonotic disease control will be assured while dogs are on the Contractor's property.

11.1.2.5 The qualifications of the dog trainers who will train the dogs and perform the pairings/placements; include the type of training, years of applicable of experience, and number of dogs trained, and type of dogs trained.

11.1.2.6 Safeguards to prevent improper release of Veteran protected health information (PHI) or individually identifiable information (III).

11.1.2.7 Measures that will be taken to protect paper or electronic records that contain Veteran PHI or III.

11.1.2.8 Procedures for notifying VA of problems and addressing problems in the deliverables as they arise.

11.1.2.9 A detailed description of the process used to pair service dogs with Veterans in the study.

11.1.2.10 A detailed description of how emotional service dogs are matched with Veterans and then will be transported to VA individual study sites outside the immediate vicinity of the Contractor's facility. VA dog trainers will receive the emotional support dogs whether transported by ground or air.

11.1.2.11 A detailed description of the resources your company will employ to meet the size and scope of the contract.

11.1.3 **Deliverable #1B.** If requested by VA, within 30 calendar days the Contractor will provide a presentation of the PMP and answer questions from VA staff. This may be on the Contractor property or done by video or teleconference, at VA's discretion.

11.2 TASK # 2 Pre-Pairing Criteria

11.2.1 **Description.** Two types of meetings will occur that address pre-pairing criteria. The first is a general discussion on how the Contractor will mesh their eligibility criteria with the VA study requirements, and the second is a meeting to address the specific needs of individual Veterans. Both meetings may be conducted by teleconference.

11.2.1.1 **Kick-Off Eligibility Discussion:** All Contractors will participate in a kickoff meeting during which eligibility criteria will be reviewed with the Contractors. Contractors will then have an opportunity to add additional items, which they consider to be pertinent in matching a dog with a Veteran with PTSD.

11.2.1.2 **Pre-pairing Individual meetings:** Contractors will meet or communicate on a regular basis with the VA research team members to review information on prospective study participants. This effort will be done to ensure that the Contractor can accept the prospective service dog "handler." If issues are identified and/or additional questions raised, the study team will work with individual research study sites to resolve questions. These meetings or calls will occur as needed.

11.2.2 **Deliverable #2A.** Contractor and appropriate personnel will attend the meeting, as agreed to by the VA.

11.2.3 **Deliverable #2B.** Contractor and appropriate personnel will attend the teleconferences as needed to ensure they are in agreement with the study team's recommendations for Veterans chosen to be paired with service dogs or to receive an emotional support dog.

11.3 Task #3, Dog Health and Soundness

11.3.1 **Description.** For all dogs that meet the general requirements (see paragraph 12.1 below, “General Requirements”), the Contractor shall provide the VA documentation of health and soundness of dogs being considered for purchase. The Contractor will identify each dog with a unique implanted microchip number. Documentation of dog health and soundness will be provided in the form of an electronic medical file that includes OFA radiographs of elbows and hips, vaccination records, health history, vet visits for illness, and other required documentation listed. Given the high incidence of disease (e.g. thyroid autoantibodies) in Golden Retrievers, OFA thyroid procedures must be conducted to identify those dogs that are phenotypically normal but may have an increased likelihood of developing autoimmune thyroiditis. Dogs that found to be normal at 12 months of age have low risk of developing autoimmune thyroiditis and are therefore preferred. The electronic file and each item within the file shall be imprinted with the dog’s microchip number.

11.3.2 **Deliverable #3:** Contractor shall provide an electronic file for each service dog or emotional support dog to be considered for purchase by the VA no earlier than 8 weeks before the estimated date of proofing by the VA trainer.

11.3.3 **Review of Deliverable #3.** Electronic files are received and reviewed by CORs (also VA veterinarians). If medically cleared by the CORs, VA dog trainer(s) with prior experience in service dogs will schedule a date with Contractor for on-site proofing of the cleared service dogs. VA trainers will also evaluate emotional support dogs prior to purchase. Once medically cleared by the VA, the Contractor cannot pair these dogs with other parties unless written permission is obtained from the Contracting Officer.

11.4 Task 4. Provide Trained Service Dogs

11.4.1 **Description.** The Contractor will train service dogs and provide to the VA a list of medically-cleared service dogs that have been trained to comply with the specified tasks 90% of the time, and passed the AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) and ADI Public Access Test (PAT) when administered by Contractor personnel. The Contractor must provide documentation that the dog is competent to perform these tasks (see Deliverables #4A, 4B, and 4C below). Once the list of candidate dogs is received, a VA trainer will arrange a date with the Contractor for proofing the dogs. In the PAT, the VA trainer will serve as the handler and assess the dog’s ability to perform the specific tasks listed below:

11.4.1.1 **Block** (stand in front of Veteran to give space). Trainers will be asked to demonstrate the ability to have the dog provide physical space in front of the handler. The dog should perform the task reliably each time and should not have to be given a command more than three times before complying.

- a. This task shall be demonstrated in a public place. The handler will walk with the dog for at least 30 feet distance then and stop. The dog should naturally stop with the handler. As a person approaches from the front the block command will be given. The dog should step in front of the handler, typically the dog stands perpendicular to the handler, to provide a physical barrier between the handler and the person approaching.
- b. The dog should be relaxed and not exhibit aggressive, defensive, or protective behaviors. The dog should not show interest in the person approaching and should stay in block position until released by the handler with an appropriate command.

11.4.1.2 **Lights** (locates and turns on lights) Trainers will be asked to demonstrate the ability of the dog to enter a room ahead of the handler and turn on the lights to ensure good visibility, reduce the risk of falls, and generally make the Veteran feel more at ease. This is a task that will be performed in the subject's home and should be demonstrated in a home or simulated home environment. A standard consumer light switch must be used (touch plates or similar adaptive hardware are not acceptable).

- a. To demonstrate the skill, the handler will walk the dog to a door or entryway and give the command to turn on lights. The dog should enter the room and turn on a light while the handler remains in the entryway.
- b. Once the lights are on, the dog will return to the handler's side and wait for further direction.

11.4.1.3 **Sweep** (room, perimeter, turn on lights, if needed). Trainers will be asked to demonstrate the ability of the dog to enter a room ahead of the handler, turn on lights, and sweep the perimeter of the room. The dog should perform this task reliably each time and should not have to be given a command more than 3 times before complying. The dog must bark if an intruder is detected. This is a task that will be performed in the subject's home and should be demonstrated in a home or simulated home environment.

- a. To demonstrate the skill, the handler will walk the dog to a door or entryway. If it is necessary to turn on lights (meaning a light switch is not accessible to the handler from the door or entryway) a command will be given. The dog should enter the room and turn on a light while the handler remains in the entryway. A command will then be given for the dog to do a sweep of the room.
- b. Once it is established that the room is clear, the dog will return to the handler's side.
- c. If the dog detects someone in the room it will alert the handler by barking.

11.4.1.4 **Bring (retrieves an object at the request of the handler)**. Trainers will be asked to demonstrate the ability of the dog to bring specified items to the handler upon request. The dog should perform the task reliably each time and should not have to be given a command more than three times before responding. This task may be applicable to both the home and public environments.

- a. To demonstrate the skill, the handler points to a specific object and gives the command. If the specified object is in a group of objects, the handler will say the name of the object in combination with the handler pointing to the object.
- b. Once the dog correctly locates the specified object, the dog carries the object to the handler and releases the object to the handler.

11.4.1.5 **Behind** (stand behind Veteran to give space). Trainers will be asked to demonstrate the ability to have the dog provide physical space behind the handler. The dog should perform the task reliably each time and should not have to be given a command more than 3 times before complying.

- a. This task should be demonstrated in a public place. The handler will walk with the dog for at least 30 feet then stop. The dog should naturally stop with the handler. The dog will be given the watch command and should step behind the handler to provide a physical barrier behind the handler. The dog should stay in "behind" position until released by the handler. Next, the handler should take the dog to a check-out counter or other place where they would need to stand in a line or stand in a group or crowd of people. The dog will be given the behind command and should step behind the handler.
- b. The dog should not exhibit aggressive, protective, or defensive behaviors.

- c. The dog should be alert but not show interest in or seek attention from the people behind the handler.
- d. The dog should stay in the behind position until released by the handler.

11.4.2 Deliverable #4A: Contractor shall provide a list of medically cleared service dogs (identified by name and microchip number) that respond to commands (basic obedience, skilled tasks [11.4.1.1-11.4.1.5], and PAT) given by the handler 90% of the time on the first ask in all public and home environments. Within 15 days of the dogs being medically cleared by VA, the Contractor must provide a list of these dogs to be evaluated by the VA trainer (see Deliverables 4B and 4C below).

11.4.3 Deliverable #4B: Contractor shall provide dates for the VA trainer to schedule an on-site visit for proofing of the medically cleared dogs and review of the training records for each dog that the VA trainer will evaluate including documentation of successful completion of the AKC Canine Good Citizen test, specific trained tasks (see 11.4.1.1-11.4.1.5 above), and PAT. The proofing dates must occur within 21 calendar days after the Contractor has provided a list of candidate dogs; the training records of these dogs must be electronically provided to the VA trainer at least one week prior to the scheduled proofing date. Training records shall include the following information:

Item 1 – Documentation of socialization to people (particularly children), other animals, and a variety of environments (i.e. public settings); documentation must indicate the type of socialization, duration and frequency of socialization and the outcome of each socialization session.

Item 2 – Documentation of AKC Canine Good Citizen certification, PAT certification, and log indicating dates and number of hours dedicated to the training on specified skilled tasks.

11.4.4 Deliverable #4C: Contractor shall make the medically cleared dogs available for the VA trainer to evaluate each individual dog's performance of specified tasks (11.4.1.1-11.4.1.5) and PAT. Contractor personnel will administer the tests and VA trainer will be handler. The Contractor trainer who trained the dog cannot participate in the evaluation other than to answer questions from the VA trainer. The Contractor shall have all necessary materials and aids necessary to complete the specific tasks and PAT readily available; the PAT must be conducted in actual and novel public setting rather than a simulated or familiar public setting. Proofing of all candidate dogs should typically be completed within one working day unless advanced authorization is obtained from VA.

11.4.5 Review of Deliverables. If the service dog cannot satisfactorily perform the tasks and/or fails the PAT, the dog may not be presented again for proofing until the dog's performance improves and additional training has occurred. In general, any dog that fails any part of the evaluation (specific tasks or PAT) twice will be eliminated from further consideration. However, depending on the reason for failing the dog, the VA may decide, at its sole discretion, to allow further testing.

11.5 Task #5, Contractor Pairing of Service Dogs with Veterans in the Study

11.5.1 Description. At the Contractor's facility, using the Contractor's pairing methodology, Contractor shall pair the VA medically cleared and proofed service dog with a Veteran enrolled and approved to receive a dog as part of the PTSD/SD study. As part of the enrollment process, VA will obtain information that assists with selection of an appropriate service dog for each Veteran and also helps ensure that Veterans would meet commercial eligibility criteria in place by the Contractor. The VA trainer or other VA representatives (i.e. VA veterinarians) may be present at the pairing for quality assurance purposes.

11.5.2 **Deliverable #5A:** The Contractor will provide a certificate of Veteran/service dog pairing within 5 calendar days of the actual pairing date, which shall include the following:

- a. Date of Pairing
- b. Veteran's name
- c. Service Dog name and microchip #
- d. Service Dog Contractor Name
- e. VA Trainer's name, signature, and date of signature as a witness of the pairing process (if present).

11.5.3. **Deliverable #5B:** The Contractor shall provide a written summary of the pairing procedure to the VA within 5 calendar days of the actual pairing date. The summary should reference the service dog by name and microchip. This information will be faxed to the VA CORs.

(Note: The pairing procedure for service dogs used by the Contractor must be described as part of the PMP under Task 1.)

11.6 Task 6, Emotional Support Dogs

11.6.1 **Description.** All emotional support dogs must meet the general requirements (see paragraph 12.1 below, "**General Requirements**"). The Contractor shall provide the VA documentation of health and soundness of dogs being considered for purchase. The Contractor will identify each dog with a unique implanted microchip number. Documentation of dog health and soundness will be provided in the form of an electronic medical file that includes OFA radiographs of elbows and hips, vaccination records, health history, vet visits for illness, and other required documentation listed. The electronic file and each item within the file shall be imprinted with the dog's microchip number. Once the dogs are medically cleared by the VA, the Contractor will provide to the VA a list of medically cleared dogs that have passed the AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) and the AKC Community Canine tests administered by Contractor personnel. The AKC Community Canine test is the advanced level of the Canine Good Citizen Program and is designed to assess the dog's obedience in real world settings. The VA dog trainer will use the AKC Community Canine Test as the primary assessment tool for proofing the candidate emotional support dogs. Once the list is received, the VA dog trainer will arrange a date with the Contractor for proofing the dogs.

11.6.2 **Deliverable #6A:** Contractor shall provide a list of medically cleared emotional support dogs (identified by name and microchip number). Within 21 calendar days of the dogs being medically cleared by VA, the Contractor must provide a list of these dogs to be evaluated by the VA dog trainer.

11.6.3 **Deliverable #6B:** Contractor shall provide dates for a VA trainer to schedule an on-site visit for proofing of the EMOTs in the previously mentioned list (Deliverable #5a) and training records for each dog that the VA dog trainer will evaluate. The proofing dates must occur within 21 calendar days after the Contractor has provided a list of candidate dogs; the training records of these dogs must be electronically provided to the VA dog trainer at least one week prior to the scheduled proofing date.

11.6.4 **Deliverable 6C:** Contractor shall make the medically cleared emotional support dogs available for the VA dog trainer to evaluate each individual dog's performance on the Community Canine test. Contractor personnel will administer the test and VA dog trainer will be handler. Note: Unless requested,

Contractor trainers cannot participate in the evaluation other than to answer questions from the VA dog trainer. The Contractor shall have all necessary materials and aids necessary to complete the Community Canine test readily available. The Community Canine test must be conducted in an actual and novel public setting; simulated or familiar public settings are not acceptable.

11.6.5 Review of Deliverables. If the EMOT cannot satisfactorily pass the Community Canine test the dog may not be presented again for proofing until the dog's performance improves and additional training has occurred. In general, any dog that fails the Community Canine exam twice will be eliminated from further consideration; however, depending on the reason for failing the dog, VA may approve another examination attempt at its sole discretion.

11.7 Task 7, Make lodging and travel arrangements for Veterans who will receive service dogs.

11.7.1 Description. The Contractor will make travel and accommodation arrangements for Veterans who will receive a service dog and be paired with that dog on the Contractor's property. VA will reimburse reasonable transportation, travel and per diem costs in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) 31.205.46, "Travel Costs." These rates can be verified on the following web site (<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>). Travel invoices with an expense summary shall be submitted on a monthly basis. Only Veteran travel is reimbursable. The maximum number of trips and duration of stay will be determined by the pairing process described in Task 1 as negotiated between VA and the Contractor in advance.

11.7.2 Deliverable #7. Monthly, an expense summary shall be submitted to VA for reimbursement with the following supporting documentation organized individually for each traveler:

- a. Name of traveler
- b. Date(s) of travel and method of travel (e.g., air, car, or train)
- c. An itemized list of lodging, transportation, and Meals and Incidental Expenses per diem expenses. The Meals and Incidental Expenses per diem allowance, or "MIE" is the maximum daily amount the VA can pay for meal and incidental expenses. The MIE rate is set yearly by the Government Services Administration (GSA) varies by locality.
- d. The city and state of origination plus name and microchip number of paired service dog (note; no phone numbers, or home addresses should be included).
- e. Receipts for expenses of \$75.00 or more must be included as attachments to each individual travel expense report in accordance with FAR 31.205-46 (a), (3),(iv), "Travel Costs."

11.7.3 Review of Deliverables. CORs will approve reimbursement of reasonable transportation, travel and per diem costs in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) 31.205.46, "Travel Costs." Ineligible costs will not be reimbursed.

11.8 Task 8, Ship Emotional Support Dogs to specific VA Sites

11.8.1 Description. Contractor shall send medically cleared and proofed dogs, within 10 calendar days to VA Medical Center's local airport or if more practical, by ground transportation consistent with USDA AWAR transportation to the VA Medical Center or the location specified by the VA. Dog trainer(s) will

pick the dogs up from the airport. Cost for this dog travel will be reimbursed by the VA. A bill of lading must accompany each shipment of emotional support dogs, information provided shall include each dog's microchip number, signalment (i.e. age, sex, and breed), weight, and coat color. VA personnel will use universal scanners to verify that the microchip number on the billing of lading matches the implanted microchip. Any dog received that its microchip number or other descriptors do not match those listed in the bill of lading will be returned to the Contractor at the Contractor's expense.

11.8.2 **Deliverable # 8.** Monthly, the Contractor will provide a report of dogs shipped to VA, which shall include dog's name, microchip number and dog's destination.

11.9 Task 9, Provide support to VA dog trainers after service dogs are paired or after emotional support dogs are placed.

11.9.1 **Description.** As needed during normal business hours, Contractor shall provide trained personnel to assist VA dog trainers with questions or a problem concerning dogs after the Veteran has the dog at home. Such assistance shall be provided by phone unless other arrangements have been made.

11.9.2 **Deliverable #9.** Should Veterans have a concern about their dog, they should contact the VA trainers; when necessary VA trainers may contact Contractor personnel to facilitate resolution of a concern.

12. Dog Source, Health and Behavioral Standards for Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs.

12.1. General Requirements. This section describes requirements for trained service dogs and emotional support dogs eligible for purchase by VA. All dogs will be evaluated on their ability to meet the standards set forth in this statement of work. However, in addition to acceptable performance during testing, all candidate dogs must be generally attentive and friendly toward people, free of anxiety around people and other animals in typical daily circumstances. They must display good socialization and be extremely tolerant of people (regardless of age, race or disability).

12.1.1 Any of the following defects in behavior displayed at any point during evaluation or consignment may be cause for rejection. This list is provided as a helpful guide and example to all persons presenting canines for purchase and is not intended to be a complete list or legally binding. The defects include but are not limited to:

12.1.1.1 Unwillingness to comply or cooperate with handlers.

12.1.1.2 Fear, shyness or nervousness in response to people or being handled.

12.1.1.3 Inability to work in proximity to people or other dogs because of aggressiveness.

12.1.1.4 Aggression toward handler.

12.1.1.5 Food and/or toy aggression. Territorial aggression of any kind is unacceptable.

12.1.1.6 Fearful or cowering behavior when being loaded or unloaded from a vehicle.

12.1.1.7 Excessive panting not due to heat or exercise.

12.1.1.8 Sensitivity or fear in response to environmental stimuli such as public buildings (e.g. hospitals, grocery stores, etc), vehicles, slick surfaces, elevated surfaces, stairs, noisy objects, crowds of people, and other stressors/distracters likely to be encountered in public places (note: emotional support dog candidates will have to pass the AKC Community Canine test whereas service dog candidates will have to pass the more rigorous ADI Public Access Test; see item 12.5).

12.1.2 Because the medical and behavioral histories of animals obtained from pounds, shelters, and rescue organizations are often incomplete or not known, such animals are NOT acceptable for use in the PTSD/SD study.

12.2 Breed, Sex, Weight, and Height Requirements. The paragraphs below detail acceptable breeds, physical appearance, and size and weight requirements for canines.

12.2.1 Breed. The canines (service dogs and emotional support dogs) shall be one of the following breeds, unless the Contracting Officer provides written approval otherwise: Labrador Retriever, Golden Retriever, Labrador Retriever-Golden Retriever cross, or German Shepherd. Contracting Officer may consider dogs of other breeds that otherwise meet the specified contract requirements. Canines should not weigh less than 45 pounds or more than 80 pounds. Canine should not be less than 20 inches at the withers.

12.2.2 Age. Canines must be at least 16 months, but not more than 24 months of age, at time of the medical evaluation. Note: dogs less than 18 months of age cannot be paired as a service dog or submitted to VA for use as an emotional support dog unless approved in advance in writing by the Contracting Officer.

12.2.3 Sex. Males and females are acceptable. All canines must be neutered (i.e. castration or ovario hysterectomy) prior to purchase by VA.

12.3 Medical Requirements.

12.3.1 In general, all canines must be in excellent health with no acute or chronic disease or condition, which could either hamper their ability to perform, or would be excessively costly to treat.

12.3.2 At 16 months of age or older, the candidate dogs must undergo a complete medical examination meeting the requirements outlined below. The cost of medical examinations performed by private veterinarians will be reimbursed by the government in accordance with CLIN 0005-4005.

12.3.3 Radiographs of Candidate Canines. Contractors must submit quality radiographs of hips and elbows for each candidate dog to the OFA. The radiographs must be obtained using the American Veterinary Medical Association recommendations for positioning and/or current OFA radiograph procedures (see: http://www.offa.org/hd_procedures.html) for hips and elbows. The submitted radiographic film must meet OFA identification requirement and must have the minimum data permanently imprinted on the film (i.e. the dog's microchip number, whelping date (or age at time of radiographs), and the date of the examination. The Contractor shall provide to VA the following:

- a. A copy of the radiograph
- b. The OFA letter indicating dog has received a hip grade of good or better and that the elbows are free of radiologic evidence of degenerative joint disease including but not limited to hip dysplasia, OCD, un-united anconeal process, elbow incongruency, and fragmented coronoid process.

12.3.4 Required Documentation. The following documentation shall accompany the canine at the time of delivery:

12.3.4.1 Current health certificate administered by a licensed veterinarian, which must be based on the following (actual test results must be provided to VA):

- a. Complete physical examination; collection of blood, urine and fecal samples for routine testing; and anesthesia and radiographs of the hips, elbows and lumbar spine (lower back). Include documentation of parasite prevention/control treatments administered and date of administration.
- b. Laboratory testing which must include at least a CBC with Chemistry Panel, complete urine analysis, and vector-borne disease panel.

12.3.4.2 Current vaccination records. All canines presented must have been vaccinated within the previous 12 months for rabies, canine distemper, canine adenovirus (Type 2), coronavirus, parainfluenza, parvovirus, *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, and leptospirosis. A vaccination certificate with individual canine identification (name and microchip number) must be provided on all canines. This facilitates health certificate preparation, if the canine is to be returned to the Contractor.

12.3.4.3 Current X-rays/radiographs (obtained less than sixty (60) days from the date submitted to VA of the pelvis and hip area and the elbows of each forelimb as described above. Dogs must be free of any condition of the bones, joints, or muscles that could interfere with performance of normal duties, such as:

- a. Hip dysplasia and elbow dysplasia. A malformation of the hip and elbow joints, respectively, which usually results in degenerative joint disease, arthritis and chronic lameness. Radiographic evidence of hip dysplasia or elbow dysplasia or degenerative joint disease, as determined by OFA veterinary radiologists will disqualify a canine.
- b. Fractures, which are unhealed, or healed fractures resulting in significant bone or joint conformation changes or lameness are disqualifying.
- c. Ligament damage, osteoarthritis, etc., of the limb joints is disqualifying.
- d. Presence of transitional vertebrae of the caudal lumbar spine, lumbosacral junction or sacrum is disqualifying. Asymmetric pelvic attachment is also disqualifying.

12.3.4.4 Pedigrees, registration certificates, scorebooks, breed surveys and other proof of lineage or related paperwork if applicable.

12.3.5 **Gait.** All canines must display normal mobility at a walk and run. Canines are disqualified for any gait abnormality, which could affect the canine's ability to perform normal duties.

12.3.6 **Skin and Coat.** Skin and coat must be healthy in appearance, displaying no evidence of chronic dermatitis, allergies, infections, injuries or marked external parasite infestation (e.g., ticks, mange, fleas, etc.). The dog should have a well-groomed appearance.

12.3.7 **Teeth and Jaws.** Canines will have normal dentition and dental occlusion. Dogs with noticeably overshot or undershot jaws will be rejected. All four canine teeth should be present and must not be weakened by notching, enamel hypoplasia or abnormal, excessive wear. They should not have more than 1/3 inch of the tip missing or have pulp cavity exposed. Oral infection or periodontal disease will be grounds for disqualifying the dog as is broken teeth or excessively worn teeth.

12.3.8 **Heart and Lungs.** Heart sounds, rate and rhythm must be normal (e.g., no murmurs, arrhythmia, etc.). In general, the cardiovascular and respiratory system must be normal at rest and upon exercise. Current heartworm disease is disqualifying.

12.3.9 Limbs and Joints. Any condition of the bones, joints or muscles that might hamper or restrict the normal performance of duties is grounds for disqualification

12.3.10 Nervous System and Basic Senses. Any defect in the nervous system, to include the basic senses of vision, hearing and sense of smell, is disqualifying.

12.3.11 Heartworms. All canines submitted for purchase must be free of heartworm infection (*Dirofilaria immitis*). The presence of heartworm infection will be determined by using a heartworm antigen test. A negative heartworm concentration test (filtration or Knott's) is not sufficient evidence to declare the animal heartworm-free.

12.3.12 Intestinal Parasitism. Dogs should be free of infection with intestinal parasites (roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, giardia and other common pathogenic intestinal microorganisms) based on assessment of stool samples.

12.3.13 External Parasitism. Dogs should be free of fleas, ticks, lice or mange mites.

12.3.14 Reproductive and Urinary System. Any congenital or conformational abnormality is disqualifying.

12.4 Specific Behavioral/Training Requirements.

12.4.1 Service Dogs. A service dog must be well behaved at all times and promptly respond to commands (verbal or hand signals) given by the VA trainer (or other employee as designated in writing by the Contracting Officer). To be effective in the trained tasks the canine must exhibit strong desire to please the handler and remain at the handler's side unless otherwise directed. In addition to the trained tasks specified in 11.4.1.1-5, canines must pass the AKC Canine Good Citizen test (see 12.5.1) and must also pass the ADI PAT (see 12.5.2) with the VA trainer(s) serving as the handler in both cases.

12.4.2 Emotional Support Dogs. An emotional support dog must be well socialized to people and other animals (see 12.1), and must pass the AKC Canine Good Citizen (see 12.5.1 below) and AKC Community Canine tests (see 12.5.3 below) when administered by a VA dog trainer.

12.5 Assessment Tests.

12.5.1 American Kennel Club – Canine Good Citizen test (http://www.akc.org/events/cgc/training_testing.cfm)

12.5.1.1 Test 1: Accepting a friendly stranger. This test demonstrates that the dog will allow a friendly stranger to approach it and speak to the handler in a natural, everyday situation. The evaluator walks up to the dog and handler and greets the handler in a friendly manner, ignoring the dog. The evaluator and handler shake hands and exchange pleasantries. The dog must show no sign of resentment or shyness, and must not break position or try to go to the evaluator.

12.5.1.2 Test 2: Sitting politely for petting. This test demonstrates that the dog will allow a friendly stranger to touch it while it is out with its handler. With the dog sitting at the handler's side, to begin the exercise, the evaluator pets the dog on the head and body. The handler may talk to his or her dog throughout the exercise. The dog may stand in place as it is petted. The dog must not show shyness or resentment.

12.5.1.3 Test 3: Appearance and grooming. This practical test demonstrates that the dog will welcome being groomed and examined and will permit someone, such as a veterinarian, groomer or

friend of the owner, to do so. It also demonstrates the owner's care, concern and sense of responsibility. The evaluator inspects the dog to determine if it is clean and groomed. The dog must appear to be in healthy condition (i.e., proper weight, clean, healthy and alert). The handler should supply the comb or brush commonly used on the dog. The evaluator then softly combs or brushes the dog, and in a natural manner, lightly examines the ears and gently picks up each front foot. It is not necessary for the dog to hold a specific position during the examination, and the handler may talk to the dog, praise it and give encouragement throughout.

12.5.1.4 Test 4: Out for a walk (walking on a loose lead). This test demonstrates that the handler is in control of the dog. The dog may be on either side of the handler. The dog's position should leave no doubt that the dog is attentive to the handler and is responding to the handler's movements and changes of direction. The dog need not be perfectly aligned with the handler and need not sit when the handler stops. The evaluator may use a pre-plotted course or may direct the handler/dog team by issuing instructions or commands. In either case, there should be a right turn, left turn, and an about turn with at least one stop in between and another at the end. The handler may talk to the dog along the way, praise the dog, or give commands in a normal tone of voice. The handler may sit the dog at the halts if desired.

12.5.1.5 Test 5: Walking through a crowd. This test demonstrates that the dog can move about politely in pedestrian traffic and is under control in public places. The dog and handler walk around and pass close to several people (at least three). The dog may show some interest in the strangers but should continue to walk with the handler, without evidence of over-exuberance, shyness or resentment. The handler may talk to the dog and encourage or praise the dog throughout the test. The dog should not jump on people in the crowd or strain on the leash.

12.5.1.6 Test 6: Sit and down on command and Staying in place. This test demonstrates that the dog has training, will respond to the handler's commands to sit and down and will remain in the place commanded by the handler (sit or down position, whichever the handler prefers). The dog must do sit AND down on command, then the owner chooses the position for leaving the dog in the stay. Prior to this test, the dog's leash is replaced with a line 20 feet long. The handler may take a reasonable amount of time and use more than one command to get the dog to sit and then down. The evaluator must determine if the dog has responded to the handler's commands. The handler may not force the dog into position but may touch the dog to offer gentle guidance. When instructed by the evaluator, the handler tells the dog to stay and walks forward the length of the line, turns and returns to the dog at a natural pace. The dog must remain in the place in which it was left (it may change position) until the evaluator instructs the handler to release the dog. The dog may be released from the front or the side.

12.5.1.7 Test 7: Coming when called. This test demonstrates that the dog will come when called by the handler. The handler will walk 10 feet from the dog, turn to face the dog, and call the dog. The handler may use encouragement to get the dog to come. Handlers may choose to tell dogs to "stay" or "wait" or they may simply walk away, giving no instructions to the dog.

12.5.1.8 Test 8: Reaction to another dog. This test demonstrates that the dog can behave politely around other dogs. Two handlers and their dogs approach each other from a distance of about 20 feet, stop, shake hands and exchange pleasantries, and continue on for about 10 feet. The dogs should show no more than casual interest in each other. Neither dog should go to the other dog or its handler.

12.5.1.9 Test 9: Reaction to distraction. This test demonstrates that the dog is confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations. The evaluator will select and present two distractions. Examples of distractions include dropping a chair, rolling a crate dolly past the dog, having a jogger run

in front of the dog, or dropping a crutch or cane. The dog may express natural interest and curiosity and/or may appear slightly startled but should not panic, try to run away, show aggressiveness, or bark. The handler may talk to the dog and encourage or praise it throughout the exercise.

12.5.1.10 Test 10: Supervised separation. This test demonstrates that a dog can be left with a trusted person, if necessary, and will maintain training and good manners. Evaluators are encouraged to say something like, "Would you like me to watch your dog?" and then take hold of the dog's leash. The handler will go out of sight for three minutes. The dog does not have to stay in position but should not continually bark, whine, or pace unnecessarily, or show anything stronger than mild agitation or nervousness. Evaluators may talk to the dog but should not engage in excessive talking, petting, or management attempts (e.g, "there, there, it's alright").

12.5.1.11 Equipment. All tests must be performed on leash. For collars, dogs should wear well-fitting buckle or slip collars made of leather, fabric, or chain. Special training collars such as pinch collars, head halters, and electronic collars are not permitted in the CGC test. The VA evaluator will supply a 20-foot lead for the test. The handler should bring the dog's brush or comb to the test.

12.5.1.12 Encouragement. Handlers may use praise and encouragement throughout the test. The handler may pet the dog between exercises. Food and treats are not permitted during testing, nor is the use of toys, squeaky toys, etc. to get the dog to do something.

12.5.1.13 Failures and Dismissals. Any dog that eliminates during testing will be disqualified. Any dog that growls, snaps, bites, attacks, or attempts to attack a person or another dog is disqualified.

12.5.2 Assistance Dogs International Public Access Test

(<http://www.assistancedogsinternational.org/standards/public-access-test/>). Either a VA dog trainer, VA veterinarian, or other VA employee (as designated in writing by the Contracting Officer) will administer this test no later than 2 months prior to VA purchase or Contractor pairing of dog with handler. Commands must be given verbally.

12.5.2.1 CONTROLLED UNLOAD OUT OF VEHICLE: After a suitable place has been found, the individual will unload the dog and any necessary equipment (wheelchair, walker, crutches, etc.) out of the vehicle. The dog must wait until released before coming out of the vehicle. Once outside, it must wait quietly unless otherwise instructed by the Individual. The dog may not run around, be off lead, or ignore commands given by the individual. Once the team is out of the vehicle and settled, the assistant should walk past with another dog. They should walk within six (6) feet of the team. The Service Dog must remain calm and under control, not pulling or trying to get to the other dog.

The emphases are that the Service Dog must remain unobtrusive and is unloaded in the safest manner possible for everyone.

12.5.2.2 APPROACHING THE BUILDING: After unloading, the team must maneuver through the parking lot to approach the building. The dog must stay in a relative heel position and may not forge ahead or lag behind. The dog must not display a fear of cars or traffic noises and must display a relaxed attitude. When the individual stops for any reason, the dog must stop also.

12.5.2.3 CONTROLLED ENTRY THROUGH A DOORWAY: Once at the doors of the building, the individual may enter however he/she chooses to negotiate the entry safely. Upon entering the building; however, the dog may not wander off or solicit attention from the public. The dog should wait

quietly until the team is fully inside then should calmly walk beside the individual. The dog must not pull or strain against the lead or try to push its way past the individual but must wait patiently while entry is completed.

12.5.2.4 HEELING THROUGH THE BUILDING: Once inside the building, the individual and the dog must walk through the area in a controlled manner. The dog should always be within touching distance where applicable or no greater than a foot away from the individual. The dog should not solicit public attention or strain against the lead (except in cases where the dog may be pulling the individual's wheelchair). The dog must readily adjust to speed changes, turn corners promptly, and travel through a crowded area without interacting with the public. In tight quarters, the dog must be able to get out of the way of obstacles and not destroy merchandise by knocking it over or by playing with it.

12.5.2.5 SIX FOOT RECALL ON LEAD: A large, open area should be found for the six foot recall. Once found, the individual will perform a six foot recall with the dog remaining on lead. The individual will sit the dog, leave it, travel six feet, then turn and call the dog to him/her. The dog should respond promptly and not stop to solicit attention from the public or ignore the command. The dog should come close enough to the individual to be readily touched. The recall should be smooth and deliberate without the dog trudging to the individual or taking any detours along the way.

12.5.2.6 SITS ON COMMAND: The dog handler/service dog will be asked to demonstrate the Individual's ability to have the dog sit three different times. The dog must respond promptly each time with no more than two commands. There should not be any extraordinary gestures on the part of the people approaching the dog. Normal, reasonable behavior on the part of the people is expected.

The first sit will be next to a plate of food placed upon the ground. The dog must not attempt to eat or sniff the food. The individual may correct the dog verbally or physically away from the food, but then the dog must maintain a sit while ignoring the food. The dog should not be taunted or teased with the food. This situation should be made as realistic as possible.

The second sit will be executed, and the assistant with a shopping cart will approach within three feet of the dog and continue on past. The dog should maintain the sit and not show any fear of the shopping cart. If the dog starts to move, the individual may correct the dog to maintain the sit.

The last sit will be a sit with a stay as a person walks up behind the team, talks to the person and then pets the dog. The dog must hold position. The dog may not break the stay to solicit attention. The individual may repeat the stay command along with reasonable physical corrections.

12.5.2.7 DOWNS ON COMMAND: The down exercises will be performed in the same sequence as the sits with the same basic stipulations. The first down will be at a table where food will be dropped on the floor. The dog should not break the down to go for the food or sniff at the food. The individual may give verbal and physical corrections to maintain the down. There should not be any extraordinary gestures on the part of the people approaching the dog. Normal, reasonable behavior from the people is expected.

The second down will be executed, and then an adult and child should approach the dog. The dog should maintain the down and not solicit attention. If the child pets the dog, the dog must behave appropriately and not break the stay. The individual may give verbal and physical corrections if the dog begins to break the stay.

12.5.2.8 NOISE DISTRACTION: The dog handler/service dog will be heeling along and the tester will drop a clipboard to the ground behind the team. The dog may acknowledge the noise, but may not in any way show aggression or fear. A normal startle reaction is fine—the dog may jump and or turn—but the dog should quickly recover and continue along on the heel. The dog should not become aggressive, begin shaking, etc.

12.5.2.9 RESTAURANT: The dog handler/service dog should enter a restaurant and be seated at a table. The dog should go under the table or, if size prevents that, stay close by the individual. The dog must sit or lie down and may move a bit for comfort during the meal, but should not be up and down a lot or need a lot of correction or reminding. This would be a logical place to do the food drop during a down. (See #7)

12.5.2.10 OFF LEAD: Sometime during the test, where appropriate, the person will be instructed to drop the leash while moving so it is apparent to the dog. The individual must show the ability to maintain control of the dog and get the leash back in its appropriate position. The main concern is that the dog be aware that the leash is dropped and that the person is able to maintain control of the dog and get the leash back into proper position.

12.5.2.11 CONTROLLED UNIT: The dog handler/service dog will leave the building in a similar manner to entering, with safety and control being of prime importance. The team will proceed across the parking lot and back to the vehicle. The dog must be in appropriate heel position and not display any fear of vehicle or traffic sounds.

12.5.2.12 CONTROLLED LOAD into VEHICLE: The individual will load the dog into the vehicle, with either entering first. The dog must not wander around the parking lot but must wait patiently for instructions. Emphasis is on safety and control.

12.5.2.13 Disqualifying Behaviors. Any dog that displays any aggressive behavior (growling, biting, raising hackles, showing teeth, etc.) will be disqualified. Any dog that eliminates in a building or shows uncontrollable behavior will be disqualified.

12.5.3 AKC COMMUNITY CANINE TEST (Advanced Canine Good Citizen {CGCA}) (http://images.akc.org/akc_community_canine/EvaluatorsGuide.pdf). The VA trainer acting as the handler will evaluate all candidate emotional support dogs using the AKC Community Canine test as described below. Dogs must successfully complete all ten items.

12.5.3.1 (1) Dog stands, sits or lays down and waits under control while the owner:

sits at the registration table and fills out paperwork.

OR

if the test is done in the community, dog waits while the owner sits and has a snack or visits with another person (e.g., at a park).

12.5.3.2 (2) Dog walks on a loose leash in a natural situation (not in a ring) and does not pull.

make a left turn

make a right turn

stop

12.5.3.3 (3) Dog walks on a loose leash through a crowd

- at a show or in class (not in a ring).
- in the community, dog walks on a sidewalk, through a crowd at a community fair, park, on a trail, through a busy hallway, etc.

12.5.3.4 (4) **Dog walks past distraction and does not pull.** This item may be tested along with #3 if there are dogs in the crowd.

- at a show or class. Dog walks by dogs waiting in the crowd – dogs 2 ft. apart.
- in the community. Dog walks by other dogs on a trail, sidewalk, in a hallway, etc.

12.5.3.5 (5) **Sit-stay in small group (three other people with dogs).** Owners and dogs are in an informal circle while owners have a conversation. Dogs are all on the owner's left side, on leash, 3 ft. apart (at least 30 seconds).

12.5.3.6 (6) **Dog allows person who is carrying something (backpack, computer bag, etc.) to approach and pet it.** "May I pet your dog?" (Item is placed on floor/ground before the person pets the dog.)

12.5.3.7 (7) **"Leave it." Dog walks by food and follows owner instructions, "Leave it."** This can be food placed by the evaluator on the floor or ground in a food dish with a wire cover as in Rally.

12.5.3.8 (8) **Down or sit stay-distance (owner's choice).** Dog is on 20-ft line, owner walks away with back to dog, picks up an item (shopping or training bag, clipboard, folder, etc.) placed on the floor, chair, or ground by the evaluator and returns to the dog. walk at a fast and slow pace.

12.5.3.9 (9) **Recall with distractions present (coming when called). Handler goes out 20-ft. (off center) and calls dog.** Dog is on the 20-ft. line from #8 above.

12.5.3.10 (10) **Dog will sit or stand stay (owner's choice) while owner enters/exits a doorway or narrow passageway. Owner calls dog through door when ready. Owner may choose to send the dog through first and have the dog wait for the owner, or, the owner may choose to have the dog go through the doorway at the owner's side. Whichever method is used, the dog must not pull the owner and must be under good control. Think of the handler having the leash in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other.**

The doorway or gate can be real or simulated with ring gates, two chairs, or a natural passage way (e.g., entrance to trail) in the community.