

VA-certified service dogs receive unlimited access to veterinary care **The U.S. Veteran Service Dog Program and Trupanion will cover 100 percent of veterinary bills for eligible dogs.**

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The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), in conjunction with Trupanion, will launch the U.S. Veteran Service Dog Program Jan. 27. The program will allow U.S. veterans with certified service dogs unlimited access to veterinary care. The program enables Trupanion to pay 100 percent of veterans' certified service dogs' veterinary bills.

The VA hopes the program will ease the financial stress veterans experience providing veterinary care for their animals. Trupanion says it's a "win-win-win" opportunity for dogs, veterans and veterinarians. "Veterans and veterinarians no longer have to worry about the cost of the treatment, giving veterinarians the ability to do what they do best—care for pets," a Trupanion release states.

A spokesman for Trupanion says execution of the program will be simple: "All veterinarians have to do is send us the bill." Veterinarians can opt to be paid up front as well.

"Whether it's a regular veterinary practice or an emergency hospital in the middle of the night—they can call us at any time," the spokesperson says. "They then just need to e-mail or fax the bill to us and we can pay them directly through Vet Direct Pay, a system that allows them to receive direct payment. They can also request reimbursement. ... In that case they send us the bill and let us know how and when they want to be paid. We can even pay them over the phone if they wish as soon as the treatment is over and before the veteran walks out of the building."

The VA will provide a list of the certified service dogs eligible for the program to Trupanion. Each dog will have a tag with a policy number created by Trupanion similar to the ones current policyholders wear. "All [veterans] have to do is show that to their veterinarian and the veterinarian can rest assured Trupanion will pay the bill," Trupanion's spokesperson says.

Veterans who request a service dog and qualify according to a VA evaluation do not pay for the dog or the associated training. For more information on the Veterans Health Administration's guide and service dog benefits, go to va.gov. Trupanion has a two-year contract with the VA for the U.S. Veteran Service Dog Program. For more information or if you have questions about the program, call Trupanion at (855) 482-0163.