




Tips of the Month

Apply:

"Can I qualify for benefits if I am still working?"

The answer to this depends on how much you are working and how much money you earn.


In many cases, if you earn \$1,170 per month (or more), your case will automatically be denied. 

Appeal:

After receiving a denial letter from SSA, your next step is to file an appeal.


The first appeal is called a "Request for Reconsideration."

The second appeal is called a "Request for Hearing."

Both of these appeals can be filed online at: <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityssi/>. 

Hearing:

Be prepared to answer this question at your hearing:

"What do you do during an average day?" 

Dear Reader,

In honor of our nation's birthday, we want to celebrate a beloved resource that helps provide a bit more FREEDOM to many people with disabilities. What could that resource be? Your four-legged best friend.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we would love to hear stories of the animals in your life!

God Bless,

Deborah L. Hardin,

Managing Attorney at The Hardin Law Firm, PLLC 

A Veteran's Best Friend

Service Dogs for Veterans - at No Cost!

A Veteran's Best Friend is a Christian nonprofit that provides and trains service dogs to Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), at no charge to the Veteran.



Founded in 2012 to address the growing number of Veterans with PTSD, our volunteer-based program trains Veteran-dog teams together over 12-18 months, creating a strong bond and well-informed Veterans.

All of our dogs come from local shelters, rescue groups, and individuals.

Changing Lives for the Better

Our program increases the quality of Veterans' lives by training service dogs to assist them in daily activities that would otherwise be impossible because of their PTSD. Some of the symptoms that our Veterans experience are flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about their trauma.

Before getting his Service Dog, Ringo, Dave recounted, "I had been isolating myself at home and was having rage attacks. My wife said I just kept getting worse." Our Service Dogs are trained to sense when their Veteran is experiencing discomfort and come between the threat and the Veteran by gaining the Veteran's attention and applying

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pressure to key points of the body that releases endorphins. PTSD never goes away, but with the assistance of a Service Dog, Veterans can control the symptoms.

Frances, a Veteran, describes the change she saw after receiving her Service Dogs this way: *"I can now go to the store alone. For years, my kids were my 'service dogs' because I relied on them to go to the grocery store with me. Now I have my dog and I'm calmer and more confident. I don't depend on others to accompany me in public. I can even go to church now."*

Both Frances and Dave are now instructors with AVBF. Their transformations resulted in a desire to "give back" - a feeling not uncommon among our Veterans.

Learn More! Make a Difference!

Our next training class for Veterans will start in September 2017. For more information please email us at avbfcabot@gmail.com, call [501-605-0124](tel:501-605-0124), or visit our website, www.servicedog4ptsd.org.

You can help us continue to serve Veterans by donating, fostering, training, or volunteering. Donations can be made online through our website www.servicedog4ptsd.org or mailed to: A Veteran's Best Friend, P.O. Box 329, Cabot, AR 72023. AVBF is a 501(c)(3) and all donations are tax deduction eligible. To learn more about volunteering with us, please email avbfcabot@gmail.com. Be sure to follow us on Facebook (@AVeteransBestFriend) and Instagram (@AVeteransBestFriendAR) to see our latest events, successes, photos, and more!

- Rebecca Scissors, Executive Director of A Veteran's Best Friend 🐾



Therapy Dogs: love, joy, and patients.

Interview conducted by Schelly Paul, Records Manager at The Hardin Law Firm, PLC.

What inspired you to get your dog certified as a therapy dog?

In 2000 we adopted our first dog since having children. She was a Boxer/Greyhound mix named Juliet. The woman that had fostered Juliet said that she had a wonderful temperament for doing therapy work, and they had already been visiting nursing homes together. She urged me to get her certified. At the same time, I was attending Bible Study Fellowship and we were studying the book of Matthew. In chapter 25, Jesus tells a parable stating "whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me." As I studied that parable, I realized that God was calling me to do therapy dog work as a ministry, not just a volunteer opportunity.



How long have you been volunteering with them? What places do you and your dogs visit?

I began volunteering with Juliet in 2000. We went to St. Vincent Rehab and United Cerebral Palsy. Unfortunately we lost Juliet to cancer in early 2007. After just a few months, we adopted Lexi, a Spaniel/Aussie mix. She continued Juliet's work at UCP, and later added the VA Hospital to our schedule. We also occasionally visit schools or nursing homes. Five years ago we adopted another rescue dog, Ditto, who is a Golden/Lab mix. She just got certified about a year ago and has joined Lexi in visiting those places. *Continued on next page ...*

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What is your favorite thing about doing this?

At the hospital, we love the joy that comes to the patients' faces when they see the dogs. Some have dogs at home that they really miss, so my dogs help filled that void. At UCP, much of the joy is because we do get to see the same people week after week, and we really build relationships with them. UCP even lists Lexi and Ditto's birthdays on their wall, and they were recently given a big batch of home made dog treats.

How long does it usually take for benefits to be realized?

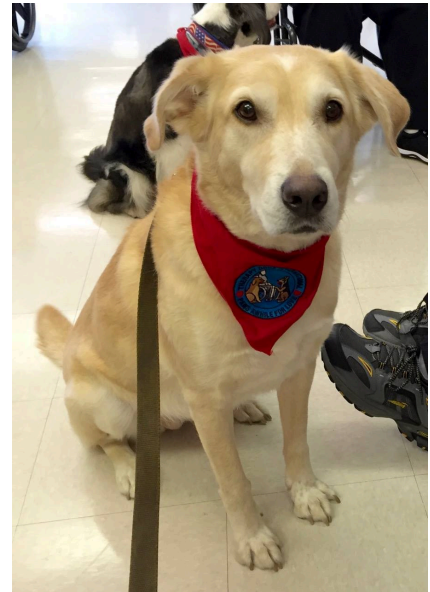
I don't think this question really applies. Our job is just to bring love and joy to them, and it comes the first time (and every time) they meet the dogs!

Can you describe a favorite moment or the most dramatic change you've witnessed?

I remember bringing Lexi into a patient's room at the VA and introducing her. The man began to pet her and spoke her name over and over. The nurses were astonished; these were the first words he had spoken since being there! We often find that the dogs bring out verbal communication in patients that have a hard time doing it.

Thank you, Debbie Strobel, for sharing your experience with us!

Bio: Debbie Strobel is a freelance art director as well as a pastel painter. She is involved in many volunteer opportunities. Besides therapy dog work, she is also the State Coordinator for Moms in Prayer, an interdenominational ministry that prays for children and schools. Debbie and her husband have lived in North Little Rock since 1981. They have two grown sons. 🐾



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Open to:


- Arkansas SSDI/SSI Claimants
- Friends and Family Members
- Other disability advocates

Questions always welcome!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/hardindisability/>

More Information

To learn more about the SSDI/SSI application or appeals process, visit our website at: www.hardindisability.com,

or call us at: [\(501\) 247-1830](tel:(501)247-1830) 

Learn more about Service Dogs or Therapy Dogs:

A Veteran's Best Friend provides and trains service dogs to Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), at no charge to the Veteran. Web: www.servicedog4ptsd.org

ABLEPaws, Inc. has teams participate in both Animal Assisted Activities and Animal Assisted Therapy. Web: <http://www.ablepaws-arkansas.com/>


Autism Service Dogs of America (ASDA) provides service dogs that provide physical safety and an emotional anchor for children with autism. Email:

info@autismservicedogsofamerica.org Web: <http://autismservicedogsofamerica.com/>

Canine Companions for Independence provides assistance dogs for children and adults with disabilities. Each life-changing dog is provided free of charge to recipients. Web: <http://www.cci.org/about/>

Please Don't Pet Me explains the differences Between Service Dogs, Therapy Dogs and Emotional Support Animals. Web: <http://pleasedontpetme.com/differences.php>


Soldier On Service Dogs provides trained service dogs to Northwest Arkansas Veterans diagnosed with PTSD and/or Traumatic Brain Injuries, free of charge. Call: [\(479\) 521-9301](tel:(479)521-9301)
Email: info@soldieronservicedogs.org

Southeastern Guide Dogs provides service dogs to veterans and people who have lost their vision, at no cost. Call: [\(941\) 729-5665](tel:(941)729-5665) Web: <https://www.guidedogs.org/> 

We are listening!

If you have requests, suggestions, or submissions for a future issue of the Hardin Disability newsletter, please email: newsletter@thehardinlawfirm.com



We'd love to hear from you! 

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