

# **The Psychiatric Service Dog (PSD) Therapeutic Model: Harnessing Twelve Years of Grass-Roots Development**

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The PSD Therapeutic Model is a framework that was developed by Dr. Esnayra beginning in 1997 with significant input over time from the PSD handler community. The framework embraces an ethical approach to animal guardianship and 24/7 human-canine partnership. Persons living with mental health disabilities are choosing to train a PSD for themselves using guidelines set forth by the Psychiatric Service Dog Society (PSDS) and under the tutelage of a local professional dog trainer. PSDS has identified numerous tasks and therapeutic functions across a range of DSM-IV diagnoses that PSD may be trained to perform or provide. A majority of PSD handlers are reporting diminishment of refractory symptoms and reduced usage of psychotropic medication since partnering with their PSD. A large fraction of these come from trauma backgrounds that derive from abusive childhoods. A new trauma cohort has emerged recently among returning soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan. PSDS and its research collaborators are currently awaiting IRB approval from the U.S. Army for a research protocol that will be implemented at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. Study specifics will be discussed as part of our presentation at the Waltham Foundation.