

Illinois Provides Important Resources for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

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SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Governor JB Pritzker acknowledged U.S. Service Members who dedicate their lives to protecting the nation’s independence and freedom today by reminding residents about the Illinois Governor’s Challenge Campaign. The initiative created the Veterans Crisis hotline and online training resources for organizations interested in supporting Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF).

Too often, Veterans face their toughest challenges when they return home. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates 17-22 Veterans die by suicide in our country every day.

“As Governor, I am committed to making sure that every Illinoisan, including our veterans, has access to quality mental healthcare and critical suicide prevention services that save countless lives,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “It’s why we started the Illinois Governor’s Challenge in partnership with IDHS and IDVA to combat suicide among service members, veterans, and their families. From our 24/7 crisis hotline to online training resources, the Governor’s Challenge is expanding both access and awareness—and I urge all Illinoisans to utilize these tools to protect and support our state’s extraordinary service members.”

“Offering suicide prevention services to Service Members, Veterans, and their Families is a crucial and compassionate initiative aimed at addressing the mental health challenges faced by those who serve or have served in the armed forces,” **said Dulce Quintero, Secretary Designate of the Illinois Department of Human Services**. “By providing specialized support and resources such as a crisis hotline staffed by trained professionals, outreach programs, and customized training, we can offer these groups the help they deserve when they are in need. These services focus on creating a safe environment to discuss their struggles, trauma, and emotional pain. Implementing comprehensive mental health care is essential to honor their sacrifices and ensure their well-being, fostering resilience and hope for a bright future.”

Illinois Veterans Crisis Line

The statewide Veterans Crisis Line serves SMVF, their friends and family, and those who support them. The crisis line is free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Callers do not need to be enrolled in VA services to use the Veterans Crisis Line. For support, SMVFs can call 988 directly and then press 1, text 838255, or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net with a trained professional.

“Suicide is preventable. The Governor's Challenge initiative is designed to raise awareness and reduce stigma, as well as provide tools for those who want to support people who currently serve and have served our country, as well as for their family and friends,” **said Dr. Teresa Glaze, Ph.D., LCSW and Campaign Team Leader**.

Online training resources

The Governor's Challenge has partnered with [PsychArmor](https://PsychArmor.org), a national nonprofit providing education and training to improve the outcomes of military-connected individuals to offer free online courses to prevent suicide among SMVFs. The online

training program is open to anyone, with short courses geared toward health care professionals, mental health providers, social workers, educators, clergy, community members, and others who work with service members and Veterans in need, or their families. Participants can receive continuing education credits.

Training courses are available by visiting Illinois-SMVF.PsychArmor.org.

The training program covers various topics including the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Participants will learn how to recognize these symptoms in service members and Veterans, as well as how to provide appropriate support and resources. The program also discusses strategies for suicide prevention, crisis intervention, and safe gun storage.

“The Governor's Challenge has successfully raised awareness of Veteran suicide and how each of us can play a role in helping Veterans in crisis,” **said Terry Prince, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs.** “We invite everyone to join this crusade and protect those who have protected us.”

Take action today

For more information and to get involved with the Illinois Governor's Challenge visit SaveVets.Illinois.gov.