

# IJF Mission Brief

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023



ILLINOIS  
JOINING  
FORCES

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

**BraveHearts Therapeutic Riding & Educational Center** provides equine assisted activities and therapies to individuals, including U.S. military veterans. [Learn more about BraveHearts](#)

## SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION

Winter not only brings cold days and long nights, but also social isolation. **"We typically think of loneliness as a consequence of depression, rather than a cause."** To learn more about the effects of loneliness in Veterans, [click here](#).

Connect with a Veteran in your life today.

## IJF CARE COORDINATION CENTER

You are not alone: To request assistance, call: [833-INFO IJF \(463-6453\)](tel:833-INFO-IJF-463-6453) or online: <http://illinoisjoiningforces.org/get-help>



## IDVA NEWS & UPDATES

See what's happening at the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs [here](#).

# A NEW YEAR SAME IJF MISSION

## Happy New Year!

The mission for IJF continues in 2023 with a focus on Connection and Collaboration. As part of Operation Connect Illinois, IJF is announcing some exciting changes, new collaborations, and great upcoming events.

In the first quarter of the year, our Care Coordination Center will be accessible **24/7/365** by calling [833-INFO IJF \(463-6453\)](tel:833-INFO-IJF-463-6453), enabling us to better meet the needs of the Illinois SMVF community. Click here to request assistance: [IJF Care Coordination Center](#).

We're excited to partner with great organizations in the upcoming year, including **IDVA, Federal VA, Cook County DVA, 211, and hundreds of local resource providers** throughout Illinois to meet the needs of our SMVF community.

**IJF was honored to receive the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant** – one of only two Illinois organizations awarded the grant. The grant enables IJF to address the needs of Veterans at risk for suicide by:

- increasing our service coordination availability
- expanding outreach, education, and awareness throughout the state, especially in rural areas with limited resources
- connecting to more behavioral health services and providing upstream resource navigation through high-touch, holistic case management

## Operation Connect Illinois

We look forward to our first Summit of 2023, planned for April in the Chicagoland area – visit our [website](#) for more information soon!

We will be expanding our support of and partnership with [Veteran Support Communities](#) (local Veteran Collaboratives) throughout Illinois. Click [here](#) for more information.

IJF wishes you a happy and healthy New Year. We look forward to making 2023 a year of Connection and Collaboration for our SMVF community.

## IJF FEATURE HEALTH & WELLNESS



**Veterans' interest in meditation, yoga, and acupuncture continues to grow.**

Many Veterans are looking for alternatives to traditional treatment modalities. According to a study published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* (Nov. 2022), interest in complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches, such as meditation, yoga, and acupuncture, continues to grow. The evidence of effectiveness for some CIH approaches has increased in the last decade, especially for pain, with many being recommended in varying degrees in national guidelines. To offer non-pharmacological health management options and meet patient demand, the nation's largest integrated healthcare system, the Veterans Health Administration (VA), greatly expanded their provision of CIH approaches recently.

Veterans' use of these approaches increased 70% in three years. By 2019, use was 5.7% among all VA patients, but highest among patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain (13.9%), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; 10.6%), depression (10.4%), anxiety (10.2%), or obesity (7.8%). The approach used varied by age and race/ethnicity, with women being uniformly more likely than men to use each approach. Patients experiencing chronic musculoskeletal pain, obesity, anxiety, depression, or PTSD were more likely than others to use each of the approaches.

Visit [IJF's website](#) for more information and resources about alternative treatments and wellness.

ILLINOIS JOINING FORCES | [www.illinoisjoiningforces.org](http://www.illinoisjoiningforces.org)



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