



MAY UPDATE

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



THE NATIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES AT RUSH – The Road Home Program

provides no-cost treatments for Veterans, regardless of discharge status, and their families.

[Learn more about The Road Home Program at Rush](#)

SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION

Research suggests that suicide prevention is best achieved by a focus across the individual, family, and community. Families, caregivers and friends can play an important role in helping prevent suicide by recognizing when a Veteran is in crisis and connecting the Veteran with sources of help.

Are you a veteran in crisis or concerned about one? The Veterans Crisis line is Available 24/7: Dial 988 then Press 1, Text 838255 or Chat Live at veteranscrisisline.net A caring, qualified responder will listen and help.

IJF CARE COORDINATION CENTER (CCC) - Available 24/7/365

You are not alone. CCC is also available to family members. To request assistance, call: 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](#).

May is both Military Appreciation Month and National Mental Health Awareness Month, making it the perfect time to recognize and honor the sacrifices and contributions of those who have served in the armed forces, as well as to raise awareness about the challenges they face.

AFTER ACTION REPORT

On April 19th, IJF held its 2023 Annual Summit *Operation Command Illinois*. The summit, geared toward industry leaders and veteran services providers, brought people throughout the state together for a single purpose, Veteran Suicide Prevention. Throughout the day, participants were able to hear from IJF, Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Terry Prince, Illinois Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major Ballowe, Rush Road Home's Senior Clinical Counselor Benjamin Shulman, and Illinois Division of Mental Health's Illinois Governor's Challenge Team Leader Dr. Theresa Glaze. The afternoon featured service provider roundtable discussions on key topics facing Veterans, which included: *Behavioral Health/Suicide Awareness; Housing Homelessness and Material Needs; Education and Employment; and Women Veterans*. Veterans, along with service providers, shared their experiences and discussed best practices and challenges, while learning from others. Education, networking, and collaboration were enjoyed among 140 Illinois Veterans service providers who attended. The summit was supported in part by the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program.

"The Veterans Assistance Commission of Kankakee County took the day off to adventure up north for the Illinois Joining Forces Annual Summit which never disappoints. It was a day of team building for our office and gaining knowledge of all the resources Illinois has to offer for our Veterans." Karen Smetanski, Assistant Superintendent, VAC of Kankakee County

OPERATION CONNECT ILLINOIS: THE NEXT MISSION
Save the date! On July 28th, 2023, Illinois Joining Forces will host an Aurora Regional Summit and Resource Fair and Military and Veteran Family Night Out at Blackberry Farms. The Regional Summit for Service Providers serving Will, Kendall, Kane, and DuPage Counties will focus on resource connection and collaboration and take place from 1-4pm. Veterans are welcome to attend the summit, but we ask that all family members under the age of 18 be in attendance for the family event only.

The family night out will take place from 5-8pm and will include an opportunity for Veterans to meet with service providers and gather information from resource tables, while enjoying a few hours of family fun, including a carousel, wagon and train rides, face painting, dinner provided by Mission BBQ, and more.

COMING IN JUNE

In partnership with the Illinois Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Illinois Joining Forces will be launching the Illinois Warrior Assistance Program (IWAP) this summer. IWAP is a 24/7/365 **Warm Helpline** to support Illinois Veterans, their families and caregivers experiencing emotional challenges associated with PTSD, mild TBI, sexual trauma, stress, anxiety, depression, addiction and substance abuse. It will also support overall emotional wellness, offering high-touch, holistic resource navigation and case management service, and providing information, resource referrals, and peer support. Stay connected to IJF for more details.

IJF FEATURE WELLNESS



[Click Here](#) to access a Self Care Assessment

Don't Forget About Yourself

"Self-care isn't selfish, it's absolutely necessary."

There are many pillars of self-care: financial, emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual, environment, financial, and social. Practicing self-care means different things to different people and actually doing it isn't always easy. At its core, practicing self-care means taking the time to do the things that make us feel good and that enable us to get and stay healthy. Taking care of your own mind and body is important for everyone, especially for the military and veteran population. The approach you take to self-care can be nuanced and personal. There are constructive ways to manage pain, stress, and your mental health, and to work through potential trauma.

Below are examples of self-care activities that may be beneficial:
Exercise: Regular physical activity, such as walking, running, swimming, or weightlifting, can help improve mental and physical health. Exercise has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, improve mood, and increase energy levels.

Mindfulness: Mindfulness practices, such as meditation or deep breathing exercises, can help manage stress and anxiety, improve focus and concentration, and promote relaxation.

Therapy: There are many types of effective therapy available. These include cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), equine therapy, art therapy, music therapy, and acupuncture to name a few.

Nutrition: Eating a balanced diet can help maintain physical health and energy levels.

Sleep: Getting enough sleep is essential for physical and mental well-being. Developing good sleep habits, such as creating a relaxing bedtime routine, avoiding caffeine and alcohol before bed, and sleeping in a cool, quiet, dark room, can help improve sleep quality.

Hobbies: Engaging in hobbies that bring joy and fulfillment (anything from reading and writing to gardening or woodworking) can help manage stress and improve overall well-being.

Social support: Staying connected with family and friends, or participating in peer support groups or activities, can provide a sense of community and belonging.

For more ideas and information, [contact IJF](#) or visit the [VA's Whole Health Library](#).

MYTHS ABOUT SELF-CARE

- ❌ Self-care is an indulgence
- ✅ Self-care is a necessity that helps you maintain your health and well-being. It's not a luxury or a reward, but a fundamental part of living a healthy life.
- ❌ Self-care is selfish
- ✅ When you take care for yourself and get sufficient rest, you're better able to care for others and contribute to your community.
- ❌ Self-care is a one-time experience
- ✅ Self-care is an ongoing practice that involves making healthy choices in your daily life, such as eating well, exercising, and getting enough sleep.
- ❌ Self-care is time-consuming
- ✅ Self-care doesn't require you to take a huge amount of time from your busy day.

BENEFITS OF SELF-CARE

1. **MANAGE STRESS**
Self-care helps reduce stress levels, which can improve your overall health and well-being.
2. **IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY**
When you take care of yourself, you're better able to focus and get things done.
3. **PHYSICAL WELL-BEING**
Regular exercise and a healthy diet can improve your physical health and energy levels.
4. **IMPROVE MOOD**
Self-care activities like meditation and deep breathing can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.
5. **IMPROVE YOUR SELF-ESTEEM**
Taking care of yourself shows that you value yourself and your well-being.
6. **PREVENT DISEASE**
Regular check-ups and healthy lifestyle choices can help prevent chronic diseases.
7. **IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP**
Establishing a bedtime routine and avoiding caffeine and alcohol before bed can help improve your sleep quality.
8. **TAKE CARE OF YOUR MIND**
Meditation and other mindfulness practices can help improve your mental health and focus.
9. **TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY**
Regular exercise and a healthy diet can help improve your physical health and energy levels.
10. **TAKE CARE OF YOUR SOUL**
Engaging in activities that bring you joy and fulfillment can help improve your overall well-being.

