



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



IJF is proud to spotlight the Aurora Vet Center.

Community-based Vet Centers, often known as the VA's Storefront Centers, are staffed by Veterans who understand what it's like to transition. They offer confidential help for Veterans, service members, and their families at no cost in a non-medical setting. Services include: readjustment counseling for needs such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the psychological effects of military sexual trauma (MST).

[Learn more about The Aurora Vet Center](#)

SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION

Are you worried a Veteran or service member in your life is considering suicide? **ASK.** Asking about possible suicidal thoughts opens communication, breaks isolation, and validates emotions, reducing stigma and providing an opportunity for immediate support. Then, **SEEK HELP.** 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

Before a problem becomes a crisis, IJF can help. CCC is also available to family members. To request assistance, call: **833-INFO IJF (463-6453)** or online: <https://illinoisjoiningforces.org/get-help>

IDVA NEWS & UPDATES



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

A Message from the IJF Executive Director, Brenda Osuch

Thanks to the support and collaboration of so many, we are excited to share the success of recent events that have advanced our mission to bring together public, private, and government stakeholders to collaboratively support Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF).

As part of Operation Connect Illinois, Illinois Joining Forces hosted the 2023 Aurora Area Regional Summit at Blackberry Farms on Friday, July 28th. Thanks to the generous support of the SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program and the Dunham Foundation, this remarkable event gathered 90 dedicated service providers from Kane, Kendall, Will, and DuPage Counties. The day set the stage for fostering collaboration and innovation and featured keynote speaker Stephanie Kifowit, Illinois State

Representative 84th District, and a panel discussion on the challenges of "life's transitions." Following the summit, our Military and Veterans Family Night Out attracted over 150 attendees ranging in age from newborn to 101. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with service providers at their resource tables and enjoy an evening of camaraderie, support, and fun for all ages. Highlights of the evening included face painting, rides, and a complementary BBQ dinner.

IJF hosted our inaugural "Soaring to New Heights" fundraising event on August 18th. We extend our gratitude to those who made this event an incredible success. The day unfolded in the heart of Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood at the exquisite home of Bob Buford. Set against the backdrop of the exhilarating Chicago Air and Water Show, attendees were treated to a captivating experience featuring Scott Kartvedt. As the former Commanding Officer of the Navy's pioneering stealth fighter squadron and a skilled Blue Angel pilot, Mr. Kartvedt shared commentary and insights, creating an unforgettable afternoon. The generosity of our sponsors and host played an instrumental role in making the event a resounding success, and we extend our heartfelt appreciation for their commitment to our shared cause.

As a busy summer comes to a close and September, which marks Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, begins, we at Illinois Joining Forces are reminded of the critical importance of fostering connection, raising awareness, and collaborating with one another. IJF is committed to reaching veterans upstream of crisis through collaboration, education, and outreach.

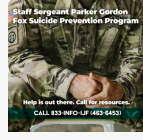
Warm regards,

Brenda Osuch

No one organization can do it all. But together we can do anything.

IJF FEATURE

Navigating Away from Crisis



Navigating Away from Crisis: Veterans and the Role of IWAP and IJF's Care Coordination Center

Veterans often face a unique set of challenges, with the scars of their service sometimes extending far beyond the battlefield. Navigating the post-service landscape can be daunting, and at times, these challenges may escalate to a point of crisis. However, there are proactive steps Veterans can take to steer clear of crisis, and services like the Illinois Warrior Assistance Program (IWAP) and IJF's Care Coordination Center stand ready to provide critical support.

- 1. Proactive Steps for Crisis Prevention:** Avoiding crisis starts with recognizing signs of emotional distress or instability. Veterans should prioritize self-care, maintain a support network of friends and family, and reach out for professional help when needed. Engaging in regular physical activity, seeking counseling, and staying connected with fellow Veterans can also play a crucial role in preventing a crisis from developing.
- 2. The Role of IWAP:** The Illinois Warrior Assistance Program (IWAP) offers a lifeline for Veterans facing emotional challenges. IWAP is not a crisis hotline, but a comprehensive resource that provides confidential assistance. Veterans and their families can reach out to IWAP 24/7 for guidance on a wide range of issues, from managing post-traumatic stress to coping with anxiety and depression. By offering a safe space for Veterans to share their concerns and access the help they need, IWAP acts as a vital buffer against the escalation of crises. *The IWAP warm helpline is 877-455-IWAP (4927). This is NOT a hotline, crisis line or suicide prevention line. If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, please call 988 and select 1, or in an emergency, call 911.
- 3. The Role of IJF's Care Coordination Center:** The Care Coordination Center serves as a central point of contact, helping Veterans and their families navigate the labyrinth of available services. Trained peers provide assessment, practical guidance, case management, and resource navigation to appropriate local and national service providers. This proactive approach ensures that Veterans can access the support they require before their challenges escalate to crisis levels. To reach the Care Coordination Center, call 833-INFO-IJF (463-6453).
- 4. A Collaborative Approach to Crisis Prevention:** Veterans can significantly benefit from a collaborative approach involving both self-awareness and external support. By taking proactive steps to maintain mental and emotional well-being, and by leveraging resources like IWAP, Operation Connect Illinois - CARES which includes SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program and the IJF's Care Coordination Center, Veterans can avoid crises and chart a course towards a more stable and fulfilling post-service life.