



Illinois Department of
Veterans' Affairs

**For Immediate Release:
May 25, 2023**

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Illinois Governor's Challenge Campaign Launches Resources to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

*Confidential hotline and customized training resources provide
vital support*

SPRINGFIELD – To further respond and provide support to the military community, the Illinois Governor’s Challenge Campaign announced today the availability of Online Training Resources for organizations interested in supporting Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF). The training effort is in tandem with promoting the Veterans Crisis hotline specifically serving SMVF.

“Since kicking off the Illinois Governor's Challenge in November, my office, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs have worked in partnership to implement a comprehensive approach to combat suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “The crisis hotline and training resources are an integral piece to increasing access to mental health resources across the state.”

“Offering suicide prevention services to veterans is a crucial and compassionate initiative aimed at addressing the mental health challenges faced by those who have served in the armed forces,” **said Grace B. Hou, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services**. “By providing specialized support and resources, such as crisis hotlines staffed by trained professionals, counseling services, and outreach programs, we can reach out to veterans in need and offer them



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the help they deserve. These services can focus on creating a safe and non-judgmental environment for veterans to discuss their struggles, trauma, and emotional pain. Additionally, connecting veterans with peer support networks and promoting community engagement can foster a sense of belonging. Implementing comprehensive mental health care for veterans is essential to honor their sacrifices and ensure their well-being, fostering resilience and hope for a brighter future.”

This statewide Veterans Crisis Line serves SMVFs, their friends, and those who support them and are struggling with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). 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 www.veteranscrisisline.net with a trained professional.

“According to the Centers for Disease Control, the suicide rate among males in 2021 was approximately four times higher than the rate among females. Males make up 50% of the population but nearly 80% of suicides. Rates of suicide among Illinois’ military population is 26 percent. Our goal is to eliminate suicide,” **said Dr. Teresa Glaze, Ph.D, LCSW and Campaign Team Leader.** “Suicide is preventable and through these new resources, the Governor's Challenge will continue to raise awareness and reduce stigma, as well as provide tools for people that want to support those that serve and have served our country, as well as to their family and friends.”

The Governor's Challenge has partnered with [PsychArmor](https://illinois-smvf.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 all individuals, with short courses geared toward healthcare 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 certification and continuing education credits. Training courses are available by visiting <https://illinois-smvf.psycharmor.org>.

“The Governor’s Challenge Campaign is excited to partner with Military and Veteran-serving organizations to make real progress across the state. We feel confident that by providing training to a wide range of professionals and community members, the campaign is creating a strong network of individuals that are equipped to support our military community in need,” **Glaze added.**



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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 and how to provide appropriate support and resources. The program will also cover strategies for suicide prevention, crisis intervention, and safe gun storage.

“The crisis line and online training resources are just two components of a larger effort to combat Service Member and Veteran suicide in Illinois,” **said Terry Prince, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs.** “By increasing awareness and knowledge about the unique challenges that Service Members and Veterans face, Illinoisans can work together to prevent suicide and provide the care and support that our Service Members, Veterans, and their Families deserve.”

For more information and to get involved with the Illinois Governor’s Challenge to eliminate suicide among SMVFs, visit savevets.illinois.gov.

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