



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

833 SOUTH SPRING STREET, SPRINGFIELD, IL 62704 VETERANS.ILLINOIS.GOV

Dear fellow Illinois Veteran:

On behalf of Governor JB Pritzker, myself, and the entire State of Illinois, we are honored you have chosen Illinois, a veteran-friendly state with over 577,000 veterans, as your home. If you are not already connected with the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA), we would like to introduce you to the resources we have available to help you obtain your earned benefits, services, and compensation. With over 1,200 employees across the state, we are poised to work side-by-side with you to ensure you thrive in Illinois.

Within this letter and the enclosed materials, you will discover many opportunities and services established for you in Illinois. The IDVA Veteran Service Officers (VSO) located across the state are equipped with information on a variety of programs and can help you understand how to access the benefits you have earned. Additionally, staff are specifically trained and licensed by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to assist you with disability compensation applications. You can learn more about your benefits [HERE](#).

I cannot overstate the importance of connecting to an Illinois VSO as early as possible. Whether they are part of IDVA, the County Veterans Assistance Commission, or Veterans Service Organization, these officers are here to support you. Another partner of IDVA is the incredible team at Illinois Joining Forces (IJF), developed to connect service members, veterans, and their families to services and resources in their local communities.

I'm also pleased to also share that Illinois' companies are looking for veterans to fill their ranks. The opportunities are too numerous to list in this letter, but you can start with any of your favorite hiring sites online or the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) to learn more. Additionally, many counties have specific offices dedicated to helping veterans find gainful employment.

Veterans also have the option to live in one of the five veterans' homes and one transitional housing center in Illinois. These homes are in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy, and are specifically designed for veterans in need of domiciliary, skilled nursing care, or assistance with homelessness.

Lastly, I have enclosed information on the Veterans Crisis Line. If you need someone on your side, we encourage you to call the Veterans Crisis Line right away. We must take care of one another and Veteran suicides will only reduce when we leave no one behind. I hope you soon discover that at IDVA, we "Thank you for your service" through our daily actions and are dedicated to ensuring veterans thrive in Illinois.

Welcome Home my friend; I look forward to meeting you soon.

Terry Prince, U.S. Navy Veteran and IDVA Director



For continuous updates from the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs with important information on Illinois veteran benefits, services, programs, and events consider joining our newsletter. You can sign up for this monthly communication by visiting our website at <https://veterans.illinois.gov> and subscribe at the bottom of the page or click [HERE](#). Lastly, don't forget to follow us on social media at:



<https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs/>



<https://twitter.com/ILVetsAffairs>



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Outreach, Transition and Economic Development

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wants you to be successful when you transition from military to civilian life. Outreach, Transition and Economic Development (OTED) supports VA's mission by helping you and your family navigate VA benefits and services, use partner resources, and get the support you need. We are here to help you achieve and sustain your career goals, find economic success, and maintain your physical and mental well-being throughout your military life cycle. Please visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at <https://benefits.va.gov/transition/index.asp> to Learn more about OTED's current initiatives to support you.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Welcome Kit

Please visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at www.va.gov/welcome-kit to print a copy of the 'VA Welcome Home Kit' which can help guide you on your earned VA benefits and services.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare (Medical Centers and Vet Centers)

Illinois has five VA Medical Centers, 20 Outpatient clinics, 13 Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC), and 11 Vet Centers throughout the state. Please visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website at <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?dnum=ALL&STATE=IL> for the Illinois Directory.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Education and Training Benefits

Please visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Education and Training Benefits webpage at www.va.gov/education to learn more about the education benefits you earned such as the G.I. Bill®, how to manage your benefits, and other valuable VA benefits and services. You may also call USDVA Education at 1-888-GIBILL1.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill.



Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs

The mission of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) is to empower veterans and their families to thrive. We do this by assisting them in navigating the system of federal, state and local resources and benefits; by providing long-term health care for eligible veterans in our Veterans' Homes; and by partnering with other agencies and non-profits to help veterans address education, mental health, housing, employment, and other challenges. Please visit our website at <https://veterans.illinois.gov/> for additional information and resources.

Contact a Veteran Service Officer (VSO)

To assist veterans in navigating the complex web of services and benefits available, IDVA runs full-time and part-time (itinerant) offices across the state. These offices are staffed by VSOs, fellow veterans who are experts on federal, state and local veteran resources. Our VSOs are trained and accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide free assistance to veterans and their families. This includes not only applying for federal and state benefits, but also providing a variety of resources. Please visit us at <https://veterans.illinois.gov/serviceoffices.html> to locate the nearest VSO to you.

Compensation

Many programs exist to compensate veterans and their families for their service. Our VSO's are ready and willing to assist in determining your eligibility, discussing available options, and submitting the appropriate application(s). Please visit us at <https://veterans.illinois.gov/services-benefits/benefits/compensation-benefits.html> for more information regarding some of these compensation programs, or contact your nearest VSO by visiting us here: <https://veterans.illinois.gov/serviceoffices.html>

IDVA-Veterans Education and Training Sections (VETS)

IDVA-VETS approves all programs of education and training in Illinois for GI Bill® Benefits. If you would like to use GI Bill Benefits at an apprenticeship program, on-the-job training program, or in another non-traditional manner, please call 217-782-7838 to see if your education or training program may be approved for federal GI Bill benefits.

VETS also administers two state education programs for dependents (ages 10 and above) of certain veterans: Educational Opportunities for Children and the MIA-POW Scholarship. More information about these programs may be found at <https://veterans.illinois.gov/services-benefits/education.html>.



Illinois Department of Employment Security

The Illinois Department of Employment Security and the Illinois Department of Central Management Services have dedicated personnel that specialize in providing employment assistance to veterans. Military service members, veterans, or spouses can send an email related to employment to DES.MyVetRep@illinois.gov or visit <https://ides.illinois.gov/>.

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity supports and maintains a climate that enables a strong economy for their customers -taxpayers, businesses, workers and communities - by keeping, attracting and growing businesses, maintaining a skilled workforce, and enhancing communities so that the climate here is one in which businesses, small and large, and workers, can succeed to the greatest extent possible You can make initial contact at (217) 785-6006 or visit <https://dceo.illinois.gov/>.



Illinois Department of Central Management Services

The Veterans' Outreach Program provides the opportunity for attendance at seminars throughout the state whereby attendees are counseled, tested and assisted in completing applications for state employment for which they qualify. For further information, you can call 217-782-7100 or visit <https://cms.illinois.gov/>.

Illinois Secretary of State

The Illinois Secretary of State office offers a variety of special programs and services for veterans. Services include "Veteran" designation on your Illinois Driver's license, registration renewal waiver, a variety of military license plates, among other services. For license plate service call 1-800-252-2904, for library services call the TTY line at 1-888-261-7861. You can also visit <https://www.ilsos.gov/>.



Illinois Joining Forces

Illinois Joining Forces is a network of over 200 veteran- and military-serving organizations in Illinois - all working together to serve you better to create a "no wrong door" system of support. At www.illinoisjoiningforces.org you'll find a searchable directory of resources from these organizations, with the ability to connect directly with the right one for you - or to request help if you don't find what you need.





Illinois Student Assistance Commission

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) administers the Illinois Veterans Grant and the Illinois National Guard Grant. ISAC offers Illinois residents a variety of grant and scholarship programs, eligibility for which is based on factors such as financial need, academic achievement, field of study, or military service. You can make initial contact at 1-800-899-4722 or visit www.isac.org/students/during-college/military-service/.



iTransfer Illinois Transfer Portal

Apply Your Military Training toward State Licenses and Academic Credit – Now more than ever, you can leverage your military training to obtain state licenses or gain a leg-up in employment and job training opportunities. Eligible veterans can apply their military training toward academic credit at specific schools using Transferology™. Visit <https://itransfer.org/> to learn more.

National Resource Directory

The National Resource Directory (NRD) is a website that connects servicemembers, veterans, their families, and caregivers to programs and services that support them. It provides access to services and resources at the national, state and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration. Visitors can find information on a variety of topics. Please visit the National Resource Directory at <https://nrd.gov/>.

National Veterans Legal Service Program

NVLSP's Lawyers Serving Warriors® program offers pro bono (that is, free) legal help with disability issues to veterans from all eras. Our LSW program assists veterans with Discharge Upgrades, Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC), Boards of Corrections of Military Records (BCMR's), assisting with initial TSGLI applications and appeals of denied claims, and representation to service members being processed through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). For more information please visit us at: <https://www.nvlsp.org/what-we-do/lawyers-serving-warriors/>.



24/7, confidential crisis support for **Veterans and their loved ones**



If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, reach caring, trained responders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When you call the Veterans Crisis Line, here is what you can expect:

- A qualified responder will answer your call, ready to listen and help.
- The responder will ask a few questions, such as whether you or the Veteran you're concerned about may be in immediate danger or at risk for suicide.
- The conversation is free and confidential, and you decide how much information to share.
- Support doesn't end with your conversation. Our responders can connect you with the resources you need.

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect.

You're not alone— the **Veterans Crisis Line** is here for you.



Dial 988 then Press 1



Chat online at
VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat



Text 838255



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Scan the QR code to download
Veterans Crisis Line resources.



**For additional information
on Service Dogs**

Illinois Attorney General

<https://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights/servanimals.html>

Americans with Disabilities Act

https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

Visit us

<https://veterans.illinois.gov>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs/>



*For more information about the Department's programs
and services, visit our website:
<https://veterans.illinois.gov> or contact:*

Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs

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Springfield, IL 62704
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State of Illinois
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Service Animals



Service Dogs/Guide Dogs

A service dog is a veteran's companion and the bond created promotes independence and well-being. The canine is individually trained to perform tasks for persons with disabilities, either physical or emotional. For example, guiding a person who is sight-impaired, alerting a person with hearing loss, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, and calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack. For a veteran, a service dog can be integral to the healing and the management of PTSD and other challenges related to military service. A service dog enhances the life of a veteran so that they may lead productive, gratifying, and meaningful lives.



Where do I find a dog?

To receive benefits and ensure veterans are receiving dogs with the highest level of training, a dog must be received from either:

Assistance Dogs International (ADI)

<https://assistedogsinternational.org/>

International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF)

<https://www.igdf.org.uk/>

What benefit will the VA provide?

The VA provides veterinary health care and other benefits to maximize the life and utility of these specialized dogs if the dog originated with either ADO or IGDF. The VA will pay for equipment (e.g. harness and/or backpack), veterinary care including prescribed medications, office visits for medical procedures, and dental procedures requiring sedation. Vaccinations should be current when the dog is provided to the veteran and subsequent vaccinations will be covered by VA. Prescribed food will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Veterinary care does not include over-the-counter medications, food, treats, non-sedated dental care, grooming, boarding, and other routine expenses.

<https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/factsheet/PSAS-FactSheet-ServiceDogs.pdf>

Eligibility for a Service Dog

To receive any type of medical service through the VA, register at the Health Administration enrollment section of a VA medical facility or online at <https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/>. Once registered, a referral to a specialist may be requested through the assigned VA primary care provider. The specialist will complete an evaluation and make a clinical determination on the need for assistive devices, including a service dog. Each Veteran's case is reviewed and evaluated by a prescribing clinician for the following:

- Means to care for the dog currently and in the future.
- Goals that are accomplished through the use of the dog.
- Goals that are to be accomplished through other assistive technology or therapy.

