

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2023

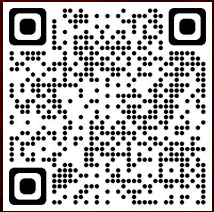
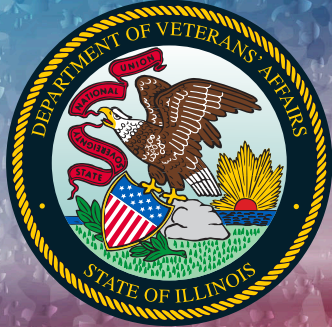




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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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On behalf of Governor JB Pritzker and all of us on Team IDVA, it is my privilege to present the IDVA 2023 Annual Report. Our mission is to empower veterans and their families to thrive in Illinois—through robust benefit programs that advance their quality of life. We do this by placing the veteran at the center of these major program areas Veterans' Homes, Veterans Education and Training, Vets Cash Grants, Veteran Service Officers, Women Veterans Programs and events, and Capital Projects to name a few. Our incredible staff is dedicated to the outstanding delivery of benefits, advocacy, and support that benefits the nearly 600,000 Illinois Veterans across the State of Illinois.

As you can imagine, we did not do this alone. The need for veteran advocacy is so important and that is only increasing. Our stellar partners at the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), Illinois Joining Forces (IJF), Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions (IACVAC), the Illinois Veterans Advisory Council (IVAC), and hundreds of public and private organizations—have made Illinois the place to be for current (and future) veterans. Additionally, our agency enjoys tremendous support from federal, state, and locally elected officials. We also stay connected with the major USDVA medical centers in Marion, Danville, Chicago, and Great Lakes that provide an incredible array of healthcare and veteran support services across 58,000 square miles of our state.

Our agency is excited to report that the \$210 million construction project of brand new buildings at the Veterans' Home at Quincy continues. Quincy is home to the state's oldest home and one of the largest in the nation. Additionally, \$25 million is being invested in projects at the homes at Anna, LaSalle, and Manteno. The modernization and improvements of these homes represent the Administration's commitment to our most vulnerable veteran population.

We teamed up with the Illinois Interagency Task Force on Homelessness to help eliminate veteran homelessness in our state, in fact we are proud to report that veteran homelessness is down 28% in just the last two years. IDVA also joined the "Governors Challenge" to prevent and end veteran suicide by recruiting up to 70,000 health care workers to participate in suicide prevention training. Much of our key focus areas will expand to assist those veterans who have been historically ignored, underserved or marginalized. This includes women, LGBTQ plus, incarcerated, homeless, minority and veterans with less than stellar military discharges.

Finally, nothing is more important to me than ensuring our veterans and their families have access to a modern network of services, backed by a team of dedicated and highly trained professionals, who always go the extra mile. Almost five percent of our population has served in uniform. Veterans are our north star, our reason for existence, and we will leave no stone unturned to help them with the opportunity to thrive in the great state of Illinois.

Sincerely,
Terry Prince
U.S. Navy Veteran



AGENCY OVERVIEW

Created through legislation enacted in 1945, the Illinois Veterans' Commission was responsible for state services to veterans until 1976, when it was succeeded by the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA). The IDVA, created by Public Act 79-376, is charged with responsibility for the welfare and needs of Illinois veterans, their dependents, and survivors. IDVA maintains administrative offices in Springfield and Chicago, five Veterans' homes, 44 full-time Veteran Service Offices, and 38 itinerant offices across the state.

Through the field offices, veterans and their families obtain assistance in navigating the complex system of federal, state, and local resources and benefits. Acting as veterans' authorized representatives, the Department's accredited Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) provide assistance in presenting claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and other state agencies on behalf of veterans and their dependents or survivors; these claims may include disability compensation, education benefits, pensions, insurance, health care, and Veterans' home applications.

IDVA is certified to provide skilled nursing and memory care for up to 1,134 veterans and Domiciliary care for 88 veterans each month through the Veterans' Homes in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy. These homes primarily provide licensed, skilled care beds available to veterans and eligible spouses and widows; Quincy and Anna also have a limited number of domiciliary beds for residents who do not require skilled care. The IDVA's Veterans' Homes are certified annually by the USDVA and licensed and inspected by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). The IDVA also provides housing and supportive services for homeless and disabled veterans at the 15-bed Prince Home in Manteno.

IDVA assists in coordinating services and activities among state and federal agencies, as well as with non-profit organizations that serve veterans. To accomplish this, IDVA staff serve on statutory committees and task forces and work in partnership with several federal agencies, including the USDVA, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Department of Labor. IDVA has established and maintains a network of advocacy with a variety of state agencies including the Department of Employment Security, the Department of Corrections, the Department on Aging, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Military Affairs, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services. Our team proudly supports nationwide suicide prevention through the Governor's Challenge.

The administrative oversight of the IDVA is conducted at Central Office in Springfield and a second office in Chicago housing the following departments: communications, equal employment, fiscal, human resources, infection preventionist, information and technology, legal, legislative, operations, and programs. Each division is led by a professional with extensive experience in their field. This strong support system works closely with the Veteran Service Offices and Home Administrators to ensure that they are equipped and supported to serve veterans efficiently and effectively.



ADMINISTRATION

Terry Prince
Director

Anthony Vaughn
Assistant Director

Melissa Black
Chief of Staff

Jennifer Franklin
Assistant to the Director

Cynthia McKee
Assistant to the Assistant Director
(Acting)

Alicia Utterback
Assistant to the Chief of Staff

Sara Augustinas
Legislative Liaison

Maureen S. Hartigan
Public Information Officer

Brittany Hawkins
General Counsel

Kourtney Hopkins
(until 6/2/23)
Senior Program Manager
Women Veterans Coordinator

Franklin "Jay" Johnson
Equal employment Opportunity Officer

Stephanie Heckenkamp
Chief Fiscal Officer

Danielle Luevano
Operations and Programs
Division Manager

Cindy Reynolds
Senior Infection Preventionist

Tammy Showers
Human Resources Manager

Lisa Tisdale
Alicia Harris (as of 5/16/23)
Labor Relations Manager

Connie Watson (until 12/31/22)
Shannon Shymansky
Acting Grants Manager

Dan Wellman
Veterans Education and Training
Services (VETS) Administrator

Crystal Womack
Senior Program Policy Advisor

Vacant
Chief Internal Auditor

Field Services

Mark Patterson
Field Services Manager

Ken Bonner
Field Training Coordinator

Robert Iverson III
Metro Region Supervisor
Claims Management Center
Supervisor (Acting)

Kimberly Fuiten
Central Region Supervisor

Jeffrey Lewis
Southern Region Supervisor (Acting)

Melissa Beckford
Northern Region Supervisor

Veterans' Homes

Angela Simmons
Senior Home Administrator and
Veterans' Home Administrator
Anna (until 5/23)

T'Kira Siler-Wilkerson
Veterans' Home Administrator
Chicago

Brandi Melton (until 7/22)
Lester Robertson 7/22-10/22
Dena Robbins (Acting) 10/22
Veterans' Home Administrator
LaSalle

Tanya Huston-Smith
Veterans' Home Administrator
Manteno

Troy Culbertson
Veterans' Home Administrator
Quincy

Wali Lewis
Prince Home Program

Gwen Diehl
Veterans' Home Coordinator



Team Budget: (L-R): Legislative Liaison Sara Augustinas, Fiscal Support David Moody, (former) Chief of Staff Melissa Black, Equal Employment Officer Franklin "Jay" Johnson, Director Terry Prince, Assistant Director Anthony Vaughn, Chief Fiscal Officer Stephanie Heckenkamp, Senior Home Administrator Angela Simmons, and Chief Results Officer Chris Wieneke.



The Field is divided into four regions: Metro, Northern, Central, Southern, plus, the Claims Management Center. The Field Manager oversees the activities related to claims and services provided through the four regional supervisors and the Claims Management Center supervisor. Case management is enhanced by the Claims Management Center, which is co-located at the VA's Regional Office (VARO) in Chicago.

Through its Field Services Division, IDVA provides a statewide system of Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) who serve veterans and establish networks within the local communities they serve. Veterans' needs for services provided by IDVA continue to be a priority resulting from the Global War on Terrorism and the inherent physical and mental demands placed upon our service members. The recent addition of the USDVA PACT Act has had a large impact on the Claims Management Center. VSOs also continue to support the survivors and families of Illinois' fallen by assisting with filing claims and receiving services earned by veterans.

VSOs are accredited by the US Department of Veterans' Affairs (USDVA). They assist veterans and their dependents in filing claims for benefits with state and federal agencies. This assistance includes applications to the USDVA for compensation, pension, and increasing disability benefits. Additionally, VSOs assist in applying for admission to the Illinois Veterans' Homes, state and federal education, burial benefits, and federal health benefits among others. Our accredited Appeals VSOs coordinate directly with the USDVA's Veteran's Benefits Administration to present and represent claims, assist veterans in appealing decisions, and appear at hearings with the claimants before administrative law judges.

In FY23, the Department's VSOs conducted **18,282** in-person and **49,342** telephonic interviews and prepared **17,607** state and federal applications for eligible Illinois Veterans, dependents, and survivors. These services were instrumental to the establishment of new claims and claims for increases in U.S. Veterans Affairs benefits for Illinois veterans, their dependents, and their survivors. IDVA secured **\$8,820,500** in claim awards, a **155 percent increase** over FY22.

Service to Veterans continues through outreach to the community by participating in special events locally. The Director, senior staff, and VSOs have made outreach and attendance at events a priority and personally attended nearly **300 events** over the past year. At these outreach events, VSOs place emphasis on making veterans and their family members aware of the services offered by the IDVA.

Field Services Division Summary of Activity for FY 2023

USDVA BENEFITS

Veterans Pension	174
Widows Pension	190
Veterans Comp	5,004
Widows DIC	468
Parents DIC	3
Appeals/Hearings	207
Hospital	578
Champ VA	230



Field Services Annual Training: Peoria, IL

The Field Services Annual Training took place in May in Peoria where the statewide Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) and Supervisors gathered to learn new information and connect. Each year, an extensive, four-day program is crafted to educate VSOs on new benefits and programs, so they are equipped to guide veterans with the most relevant and up-to-date information, topics including:

- The National Veterans Legal Services Program info provided extensive training about the PACT Act and provided reference material to guide VSOs as they manage an influx of PACT claims.
- The Mesothelioma Center offered training around asbestos claims and resources for valuable free, expert assistance.
- IDVA's Veterans Education and Training Services Coordinator Dan Wellman provided updates on education program applications and town hall meetings with approved education and training facilities.



Josh Layton, VSO Effingham, receives the Five-Year Service Award from Director Prince and Field Services Manager Mark Patterson.



VSO Tina Griffiths receives the Employee of the Quarter (3rd Quarter) from Director Prince and Field Services Manager Mark Patterson.



Melissa Downey, VSO McHenry County, receives the Five-Year Service Award from Director Prince and Mark Patterson, Field Services Manager.



IDVA VSOs at the IAVAC Conference



Veterans Town Hall with Congresswoman Lauren Underwood and Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mark Takano. Many veterans' concerns were addressed particularly health care. L-R: Congresswoman Lauren Underwood, Director Terry Prince, VSO Matthew Taylor (Winnebago County), and Congressman Mark Takano, CA.

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs' Veterans Education and Training Section consists of three Veterans' education and training programs: one federally funded program and two state programs. The federal program is the State Approving Agency and the state programs are the Deceased, Disabled, and MIA/POW Veterans' Dependents Educational Opportunity Grant and the Deceased, Disabled, and MIA/POW Veteran's Dependents Scholarship.

STATE APPROVING AGENCY

The State Approving Agency (SAA) is a completely federally funded program established to approve and audit for compliance college and non-college degree programs, vocational flight training, apprenticeships, on-the-job training (OJT) programs, license and certification tests, license and certification exam prep courses, and Small Business Development Centers Entrepreneurship Courses, so that educational assistance benefits may be paid to Veterans and other eligible persons under programs administered by the USDVA.

The following is a list of entitlement programs for which the SAA has approval and supervisory responsibilities within Illinois:

- Montgomery G.I. Bill – Active Duty (Chapter 30)
- Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP Chapter 32)
- Post 9/11 G.I. Bill – (Chapter 33)
- Survivors and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 35)
- Montgomery G.I. Bill – Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606)

In FY23, the SAA provided Illinois Veterans with opportunities to train at **1,376** approved education and training facilities. These numbers include programs of education at **192** universities, colleges, and community colleges, **122** vocational schools, and **348** high schools for dependents using the Survivors and Dependents Education Assistance program. The State Approving Agency also approved **656** apprenticeship and on-the-job training facilities for the use of veterans, military service members, and their families. **The SAA's efforts have resulted in Illinois leading the nation in active apprenticeship and OJT programs.**

During FY23, the SAA continued to provide education briefings at Naval Station Great Lakes and to National Guard soldiers demobilizing from activation. The SAA also conducted an extensive social media campaign with print and video products to expand and promote apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs for veterans. They also joined the Student Veterans of America-Illinois as co-sponsors of the Illinois Student Veteran Leader of the Year program.



Director Prince congratulates the Loyola University Veterans National Honor Society (SALUTE) inductees on Loyola's Lakeshore Campus. SALUTE recognizes and honors the service and the scholastic achievements of this generation's greatest Veterans. SALUTE is an acronym for the Society's Values: Service, Academics, Leadership, Unity, Tribute, and Excellence.

PROGRAM APPROVALS AND CANCELLATIONS

New, Revised, Other Institutions of Higher Learning Approval Actions: 10,738
Programs and Institutions of Higher Learning Withdrawn: 447
New, Revised, Other Non-College Degree Program Actions: 6624
Programs and Non-College Degree Programs Withdrawn: 411
New, Revised, Other Apprenticeship Approval Actions: 345
Programs and Apprenticeships Withdrawn: 12
Programs and On-The-Job Training Approval Actions: 879
Programs and On-The-Job Training Programs Withdrawn: 49
New, Revised, Other Flight School Approval Actions: 58
Programs and Flight School Programs Withdrawn: 0
Programs and License and Certification Tests Approval Actions: 15
Programs and License and Certification Tests Withdrawn: 1
Total Approval and Withdrawal Actions: 19,579

Deceased, Disabled, and MIA/POW Veterans Dependent Scholarship

The Deceased, Disabled, and MIA/POW Veterans Dependent Scholarship covers tuition and certain fees to an Illinois public university or community college for eligible dependents. The scholarship will cover a maximum of 120 points with points based on a semester-hour system.

In FY23, there were **1,513 claims** approved during the fall 2022 and spring 2023 terms representing **\$6,443,327** of benefits for the program funded at **\$3,500,000**. Illinois' Educational institutions graciously absorbed the remaining **\$2,943,327**. This data does not include the summer 2023 term.

Deceased, Disabled, and MIA/POW Veterans Dependent Grant

The Deceased, Disabled, and MIA/POW Veterans Dependent Grant provides an annual \$250 grant to each eligible dependent between the ages of 10 and 18 for enrollment in a school or for meeting Illinois compulsory attendance requirements as provided in the Illinois School Code.

In FY23, there were **421 claims** approved during the academic year at **\$105,250** for a program funded at \$100,000. FY24 funds were used to pay **\$5,250**.

OTHER STATE VETERANS' EDUCATION BENEFIT PROGRAMS

The **Illinois Veterans' Grant (IVG)** Program pays tuition and mandatory fees at all Illinois state-supported colleges, universities, and community colleges for eligible Illinois veterans.

Applications and additional information are available from the [VSO Offices](#) of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, college financial aid offices, or the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), 1755 Lake Cook Road, Deerfield, 60015, telephone 847-948-8550 or 800-899-ISAC, www.isac.org.

The **University of Illinois Children of Veterans Scholarship** Each county in the state shall be entitled, annually, to one honorary scholarship at the University of Illinois, for the benefit of children of veterans of WWI, WWII, Korean War, the Vietnam Conflict, and any time on or after August 2, 1990, and until those persons in service are no longer eligible for the Southwest Asia Service Medal.

Student Veteran Leader of the Year

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) and the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) named Ryan Russell, a 2023 graduate of Rock Valley College (RVC), the Illinois Student Veteran of the Year. IDVA Assistant Director Anthony Vaughn and Dan Wellman, Illinois MOPH State Senior Vice Commander and IDVA Veterans Education and Training Services Administrator presented Russell with the award on Wednesday, July 26th.

"This year's nominees from campuses across the state of Illinois were all outstanding leaders in their communities and were worthy of recognition," said Assistant Director Vaughn, "But Ryan's record of leadership at Rock Valley College and in the Rockford community made him stand out from the others. He represents those values which we desire to acknowledge with this award. With his commitment to leading and serving, we are honored to recognize him as the 2022-2023 Illinois Student Veteran Leader of the Year."



IDVA Assistant Director Anthony Vaughn, Recipient Ryan Russell, Rock Valley College President Dr. Howard Spearman, and Illinois MOPH State Senior Vice Commander and IDVA Veterans Education and Training Services Administrator Dan Wellman.

The purpose of the Illinois Student Veteran Leader of the Year Award is to recognize student veterans for the quality of their engagement with their college/university and/or the wider community. Recipients portray both strong leadership characteristics and excellence in academics. They serve as role models for the student veteran body by volunteering, participating in events, academic achievement, reaching out to fellow student veterans, and portraying an overall positive attitude. This is the fourth year the award has been presented, and Ryan is the first community college recipient of the award.

Russell, a 2020 graduate of Byron High School, began his military career in the United States Air Force and is currently serving in the Air National Guard as a munitions systems technician. He completed his Associate of Arts Degree while a member of the RVC Student Veterans of America Chapter, where he served as the vice-president and president. During his time at RVC, Russell was a member of RVC's chapter of the national honor society, Phi Theta Kappa, and the RVC Student Government Association. In addition, he was a student worker in the RVC Veterans Affairs office and served as the college's Student Trustee during the 2022-2023 academic year. This spring, Russell received the Eagle Award of Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the student category.

Russell was nominated by Milana Herman, RVC Program Manager for Veterans and Student Employment, who included in her nominating letter, that after Russell was completed with enrollment, he asked, "Now that we've got that out of the way, how can I help you and the veteran community here on campus?"

In addition to his leadership and involvement on campus, Russell is also very involved in the community. He currently serves on the board of the Vets Drop-In Center and has facilitated partnerships with local VFWs, AMVETS and the National Women Veterans United Rockford SheVet chapter. Through his efforts, he has helped to raise funds for initiatives such as the Veterans Smile Program, Rock House Kids, and free bus passes for veterans.



The Veterans Cash Lottery ticket is the Illinois Lottery’s specialty ticket supporting Illinois veterans. The promotion and sales of this specialty ticket begin in December each year, and all net proceeds from the sales of Veterans Cash Lottery tickets are deposited into the Illinois Veterans Assistance Fund, an interest-bearing account in the State Treasury. Through the Veterans Cash Committee, the IDVA awards grants to governmental organizations and tax-exempt entities that apply for funding to address Veterans’ needs in the areas of post-traumatic stress, homelessness, health insurance costs, long-term care, disability benefits, and employment and training. Since February 2006, the Grant Committee has authorized over **408** grants totaling **\$19.6** million. In FY23, the committee awarded **17** grants totaling **\$1,090,224**. The grants typically range from \$25,000 - \$100,000 per year.

The Veterans Cash Grant program has set high standards to meet statutory, reporting, and compliance standards. The result is a more defined, accurate, and transparent granting process. The application, grant agreement, and Quarterly/Final Reports provide for an increased grantee organizational structure of information and accountability through the life cycle of the grant.

The Grant Committee consists of three (3) voting members who meet quarterly to review the grant requests. They evaluate those grant applications against a rubric, make selections, and then forward the selections to the IDVA Director for approval. The voting members of the Grant Committee for FY23 are Edgar Delgado (a Veteran-at Large), Colonel Robert Tyler (IVAC), and Betsy Tolstedt as the committee chairperson.

Summary of Activity for FY 2023

GRANTS MADE BY CATEGORY	NUMBER OF GRANTS	TOTAL AMOUNT
Post-Traumatic Stress.....	7	\$379,465
Veteran Disability Benefits.....	2	\$200,000
Health Insurance Costs.....	0	\$0
Veteran Long-Term Care.....	0	\$0
Veteran Employment & Employment Training.....	2	\$130,000
Veteran Homelessness.....	6	\$388,757
TOTAL.....	17	\$1,098,223

The **Legislative Division** works with the Governor's legislative office, elected officials, and House and Senate staff and is responsible for identifying agency needs that can be met through legislation. The division's legislative liaison tracks and monitors legislation that could affect the agency, participates in legislative negotiations and stakeholder meetings and handles constituent casework. The division's legislative liaison regularly travels to Springfield to be present for committees and testify as needed.

In 2023, IDVA's primary legislative effort was the FY24 introduced budget. IDVA's FY24 introduced budget passed in the FY24 budget bill, SB 250.

It contained the following:

- A \$30.9 million increase over FY23, \$17.1 million of which is General Revenue Funds.
- An additional \$12.58 million to fully open the Illinois Veterans' Home at Chicago.
- An additional \$10.8 million to support the other state-run Veterans' homes.
- A new \$1.3 million line item for safety and security at its five state-run Veterans' homes.
- A new \$500,000 line item for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts across the agency.

In addition to drafting and following the progress of its own initiatives, the division's legislative liaison also monitors legislation related to agency needs and operations. In 2023, the division's legislative liaison tracked 178 bills that could affect the agency directly or indirectly. As time went on, this list became smaller because many of these bills did not make their way through the entire legislative process. By the end of the legislative session, 43 of these bills passed out of both chambers.

Of the 43 bills, the breakdown was:

- 14 bills focused on the military, Veterans and/or their families
- 11 bills focused on long-term care
- 7 bills focused on agency operations and labor
- 9 bills focused on miscellaneous topics
- 2 bills focused on the budget

Finally, in 2023, the division's legislative liaison closed 80 constituent cases that came from the Governor's Office of Constituent Affairs (GOCA), district staffers and legislators themselves.

HB 2507: HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION FOR VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES

During the spring session, a few major legislative initiatives related to Veterans passed out of the General Assembly. One of the bigger legislative efforts in 2023 was a series of proposed changes to the Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities. In May of 2023, [HB 2507](#) passed out of both chambers of the General Assembly. HB 2507 was a property tax omnibus bill that made four major changes to the Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities section of the Property Tax Code. First, it changed the name of the "Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities" to the "Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities and Veterans of WWII", creating a property tax exemption for all WWII Veterans. Second, it provided that for taxable year 2024 and thereafter, for Veterans that are rated 70% or higher, "the first \$250,000 in equalized assessed value of the property is exempt from taxation", regardless of the value of the property (previously the value of the property was taken into consideration). Third, it provided that for taxable year 2024 and thereafter, the definition of "Veteran" no longer requires an "honorable discharge." Rather, the Veteran must have a service-connected disability for which the Veteran receives disability compensation. Fourth, it specified that the Act could not be used as the basis for a property tax appeal for previous tax years. However, in August of 2023 the bill received an amendatory veto. During the fall veto session, the General Assembly chose not to act on this bill. However, the proposed changes to the Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities were moved onto a separate bill—[SB 2315](#). SB 2315 passed out of the House; however, it still needs to pass out of the Senate. For now, these changes are still proposed. They have not become law. IDVA and veteran advocates will be monitoring this closely when the General Assembly resumes for the Spring 2024 session.

IT Summary (DoIT)

The Department of Innovation and Technology is responsible for managing and supporting technological innovation of the Department, improving Veterans' services with technology, equipment, and the secure storage of digital data for the systems deployed for DVA staff usage. The IT Division is made up of employees from the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) which maintains the State of Illinois data centers, where all DVA data is securely stored and safeguarded, and is the central hub for supporting all digital technologies employed at our Veterans' Homes, Springfield and Chicago offices and the Field offices. This includes, but is not limited to, the complete wired and wireless network infrastructure, equipment, and IT support. In 2023, the DoIT-IDVA IT team created and implemented a new Veterans Services locator site on the IDVA website. This will make it easier for the veterans of Illinois to locate needed services and speak with a Veterans Services Officer.

Equal Employment Officer

IDVA is committed to an environment free of discrimination and promotes a collaborative and supportive work community. The Equal Employment Officer/ADA Coordinator (EEO) position ensures that the agency abides by Equal Employment Opportunities and the Americans with Disabilities Act and carries out its mission of creating an environment free from discrimination. The EEO establishes the goals and objectives of the program and creates strategic plans for achieving those goals. The EEO is responsible for all state and federal reporting and compliance, and managing sensitive situations and information. The EEO Develops and implements a comprehensive Affirmative Action Plan for IDVA and conducts EEO/AA, ADA, and Sexual Harassment training for management and supervisory staff. The EEO monitors Agency activities for reasonable accommodations and for the prohibition of discriminatory systems and practices, monitors and evaluates program operations, and implements modifications. Reports and complaints of discrimination or harassment are evaluated, and action plans are developed through the EEOs direction.

Human Resources (HR) Division

The Human Resources (HR) Division is responsible for all matters pertaining to the employees of the Agency such as talent acquisition, compensation and benefits, time and attendance, training and development, workers' compensation, as well as unemployment claims. This unit also oversees personnel operations at the five Veterans' Homes through their respective Human Resources Offices. Each HR Office works with the Veterans' home management team to develop long-term strategies for the growth and development of the Agency. The HR staff also provides essential Agency information and policy guidance. Throughout FY23, IDVA, like many healthcare institutions around the country are addressing staff shortages. HR has diligently sought creative ways to recruit and retain talent to care for our veterans. With a transition in HR leadership, the agency is undergoing shifts to accommodate its growth.



Legal Division

The Legal Division serves as the Legal Counsel for the Department, and the Chief Legal Counsel reports directly to the agency Director and the Governor's Office of the General Counsel. The Legal Division staff interprets laws and regulations; provides legal advice and counsel to senior Department staff on agency investigations and employment issues; coordinates and prepares matters for litigation or administrative hearings; provides legal advice and assistance to the EEO Office; provides assistance and review of contractual and procurement matters; reviews administrative rules or proposed legislation for legislative consideration; and provides assistance with reviewing/drafting agency policies. In addition, the Deputy General Counsel serves as the Department's Ethics Officer and the Freedom of Information Act Officer. The Assistant General Counsels support the day-to-day operations and routine legal work product required of the Department. The Legal Division and Chief Legal Counsel welcome questions or concerns from our staff, valued partners, and members of the public.

Veterans' Homes Coordinator

The Veterans' Homes Coordinator conducts long-range planning for future capital projects to meet the care needs of residents of the Illinois Veterans' Homes and preserves the State's facilities and capital assets; serves as liaison with the Capital Development Board (CDB), IDPH, the Health Facilities and Services Review Board, and the USDVA for capital improvement projects. This year, construction projects included the \$300 million Quincy Veterans' Home project and several renovation and expansion projects at the Anna, LaSalle, and Manteno Veterans' Homes.

Operations and Programs Division

The Operations and Programs Division has two major areas of responsibility that support all areas of the agency. The operations staff consists of the Supply & Services and the Records Sections. Supplies and Services work in conjunction with all other divisions in ordering and distributing supplies and printed materials including forms, booklets, newsletters, brochures, posters, banners, etc. and, if necessary, coordinates external printing requirements. This section is responsible for the maintenance management of the Central Office automobile fleet of six (6) vehicles. It is also responsible for the incoming and outgoing correspondence, with **5596 pieces processed in FY23**. Supplies & Services assisted with multiple special printing projects for Central Office and Field Services.

Also, part of Operations is the Records Section. It handles requests for discharges from veterans, service verification from authorized third parties (Funeral Homes, VACs, USDVA, and parties authorized by the Veteran), and Veteran Service Office requests for non-automated records in the Central Office. This section also continuously scans veteran records that have been obtained through the years that pre-date automated capabilities. This division also houses more than 1.9 million veterans' records dating from the Civil War Era to the present and is responsible for recording discharges and maintaining a Roll of Honor of deceased veterans in Illinois. To further enhance the department's ability to store and utilize these records, an ongoing project to convert these documents into electronic format is underway; to date, 5,632,900 military documents have been added to the electronic database. Central Office Reception is also a part of the Records Section and directs callers to the appropriate area to handle inquiries and comments received through our main phone. They also assist in records requests and processing of special program initiatives.

The Programs Division handles state grants/benefits based on the veteran's service or disability criteria and survivorship based on Illinois Veteran status. The programs based on the veterans' war-time participation are, War Compensation (Bonuses for WWII, Korean, Vietnam, Desert Storm and Global War on Terrorism); benefits based on Survivors Compensation to a spouse or qualifying dependent; The programs based on service-connected disability criteria are; specially Adapted Housing Grant and Disabled Veterans Property Tax Relief; the programs based on Veteran Status are War Veterans Grave Registration, Cartage and Erection of Headstone, Marker, or Memorial Marker (USDVA Marker Reimbursement), Military Plate Eligibility Verification for Secretary of State, and Welcome Home Letters, which identifies benefits and directs Veterans returning to Illinois to the source or assistance to pursue the benefits. The Programs Division paid over \$336,000 in state benefits to veterans across the state of Illinois in FY23.

Senior Infection Preventionist

The Infection Preventionist (IP) plans, directs, and develops a department-wide infectious disease program which includes the program's total management process including formulation and implementation of the program goals and objectives. This helps ensure the safety of the residents and the staff. IP makes visits to the homes at least quarterly and as needed when infection-related concern arise. The IP trains infection preventionist nurses and staff at each home and identifies opportunities for infection prevention based on observations, process and outcome indicators, and other findings. The IP develops and leads the process for improvement and provides day-to-day consultation on infection control problems, isolation, communicable diseases, hospital products, and procedures. Preventionists and site leadership teams at the five Veterans' Homes. The IP develops and implements policies and procedures based on currently accepted infection prevention and control best practices and keeps up to date on IDPH and CDC Infection Control rules and regulations.

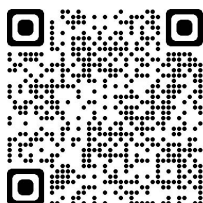
When the IP joined IDVA, the primary focus was on preventing and containing COVID-19 and while COVID-19 is still a focus, the IP is developing and implementing other infection related policies within the homes and educates staff, residents and families, as needed.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

The PIO is responsible for the creation and production of internal and external communications for the agency. The veteran community is broad, and it is important that IDVA reaches them across all platforms. The PIO oversees printed literature, social media, IDVA website, and electronic newsletters communicating relevant and current information regarding benefits, services, and IDVA programs and events.

Media relations is also critical to this role to inform the public about events and issues, particularly around COVID-19, infectious disease, and other concerns involving the Homes and the agency. The PIO drafts and disseminates media advisories, press releases, and statements.

IDVA's website is continuously updated with relevant information to ensure veterans are receiving the information they need. <https://veterans.illinois.gov/>



The **Veterans Connections** newsletter is sent to more than 20,000 Veterans, the IDVA community, IDVA Veteran service partners, and social media. It can be found on the [IDVA website](#).

IDVA communicates to veterans and the community about events, programs, and remembrance days through social media.

Visit on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs>

Visit on Twitter <https://twitter.com/ILVetsAffairs>

Women Veterans Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisWomenVeterans/>

Visit on Linked <https://www.linkedin.com/in/il-idva/>

The PIO, working with leadership, drafts communications to the residents and family members of the Veterans' Homes.

The PIO supports the Director with weekly internal messages, speeches, statements, and scripts.

In FY23, Communications disseminated the following:

- 22 press releases, advisories, and statements
- 289 Social media posts - FB and LinkedIn
- 12 newsletters distributed (constant contact, FB, LinkedIn, VSO partners, and internal



IDVA offers veterans and their families programs and events to foster connections and build strong communities. IDVA is a resource for veterans as they transition from military to civilian life. IDVA programs are designed to help them build strong foundations to facilitate its mission of helping veterans thrive in Illinois. IDVA also executes programs and events for Gold Star Families to offer support and a community. Throughout the year IDVA recognizes momentous military remembrance days through events, virtual programs, ceremonies, and social media. The program's team also showcases IDVA employees by recognizing days honoring various fields and trades. The Senior Program Manager also collaborates with Illinois Veterans Advisory Council.



Gold Star Families Programs

Throughout the year, IDVA invites Gold Star families to events honoring their heroes and to offer spaces for the community to be together. Their loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice in serving our nation, and these gestures demonstrate that we stand by them – they are not alone.

The Springfield and DuQuoin State Fairs' Veterans Days are backdrops for Gold Star Remembrance Day ceremonies where Governor JB Pritzker, Director Terry Prince, and other elected officials celebrate the lives of each of those lost service men and women. They are solemn and beautiful services steeped in military traditions and ceremonies.

Illinois is home to 336 active Gold Star families. IDVA continues to support them through these opportunities to gather and assist with services and benefits for families of lost service men and women. Anyone who has questions regarding Gold Star related issues should contact IDVA Gold Star Liaison Crystal Womack at crystal.womack@illinois.gov.

Gold Star Families Weekend

Gold Star Families connected for the first in-person Gold Star Families weekend in three years, which included two days of programs, events, and gatherings. The families connected, shared stories, and honored their hero through tears and laughter. The weekend concluded with the Yellow Rose ceremony, a somber remembrance of their sacrifices.

GOLD STAR SPOUSES AND SIBLINGS

To recognize the sacrifices of Gold Star Spouses and Gold Star Siblings, Governor JB Pritzker and Director

Prince shared these video messages:

- <https://multimedia.illinois.gov/DVA/DVA-Gold-Star-Spouses-Day-040523.mp4>
- <https://multimedia.illinois.gov/dva/DVA-Gold-Star-Siblings-Day-041023.html>



L-R: Tom Bickers, Gary Patriquin, Crystal Womack, Connie Bickers, Marley Fank



Desert Storm Remembrance Program

February 28, 2023, marked the 32nd anniversary to the end of the Persian Gulf War. The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs commemorated the anniversary of Operation Desert Storm Cease-Fire on Tuesday, February 28th at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. The keynote address was delivered by Lt. Colonel (Ret) Renyscha Brown, Acting Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit.

Vietnam Veterans Pinning Ceremony

On March 29th, National Vietnam War Veterans Day, more than 40 Vietnam Veterans and their families attended the Vietnam War Veterans Pinning Ceremony hosted by The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, the American Legion Post 73, VFW Post 4495, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Remarks were delivered by IDVA VSO Chad Roach, Post Commander Dean Ray (Vietnam Veteran), Taylorville Mayor Bruce Barry, and Colonel Robert Tyler, USMC (ret). Every Vietnam Veteran, surviving spouse, or family member was properly welcomed home and received a lapel pin as a small token of the Nation's gratitude. Additionally, Illinois state lawmakers adopted HR104 which declared March 29th the first Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in Illinois.



*Gwen Diehl - Master of Ceremonies - Post Adjutant, VFW Post 4495
 Chuck Schneider - Past Commander, VFW Post 4495 - Vietnam Veteran
 Colonel Robert Tyler - Keynote Speaker - Vietnam Veteran
 Micah Hankla - Commander, VFW Post 4495 - Iraq-Afghanistan Veteran
 Jim Businger - Past Commander, VFW Post 4495 - Vietnam Veteran
 Glen Goodrich - Past Commander, VFW 4495 and District 21 - Bugler, Taylorville Honor Guard*

Veterans Day at the Springfield and DuQuoin State Fairs



The Veterans Day at the state fairs is an annual tradition that honors veterans, their families, and our Gold Star families. In 2022, hundreds joined for a full day of programs and events. Gold Star Families and their heroes were honored at Gold Star Family Celebrations of Life. A main program spotlighted the theme of the day, "Veterans Build Illinois," and keynote speakers offered their experiences and perspectives. Lunch was offered and it was an opportunity to connect with one another and build community.

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Elk Lodge 158 commemorated the 80th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor with a program featuring the symbolic wreath-laying ceremony by the Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors.



Springfield Veterans Day Parade

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, along with the Interveterans Council of Sangamon County, County Interveterans Burial Detail of Sangamon County, and the Hayes-Krell Military Order of the Purple Heart hosted the annual Springfield Veterans Day parade. IDVA staff were out in full force participating in the parade.



Operation Rising Spirit

From Thanksgiving through the New Year, IDVA executes "Operation Rising Spirit" requesting the public to send notes of gratitude to veterans in the five state veterans' homes in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy. **In FY22, over 50 organizations, 15 schools, many churches, and hundreds of individuals sent approximately 25,000 cards to veterans.** The program is a wonderful holiday project for schools, businesses, organizations, communities, families, and individuals to bring joy to a veteran.

"Operation Rising Spirit is an effort to thank veterans who courageously served our nation, said Director Terry Prince. "This simple gesture brings more joy to a veteran than you can imagine. Consider gathering friends and family to support this meaningful effort during this holiday season."



PINK OUT DAY

In honor of the millions of women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, IDVA staff participated in a department-wide "Pink Out Day" to show support for the women across the world who have or are actively battling breast cancer.

Purple Up Day: In Honor of Military Children

Each year, IDVA shows its support of military children by wearing purple on Purple Up Day.

"I wanted to send a BIG thank you to everyone who participated in today's Purple UP day to show appreciation for the military child. I participated today in honor of my daughter, Gabriella. She's been a military child her ENTIRE life and has made many sacrifices so her parents could serve. Everything that I went through, she went through too. These kids deserve the world."

- United States Marine Corps Veteran and IDVA Operations & Programs Manager Danielle N. Luevano



Luevano's daughter Gabriella pins her to the rank of E-6 (Staff Sergeant)



Team Fiscal: Central Office



Chicago Office



Veterans' Home at LaSalle

Building on Director Prince's investment in IDVA's greatest asset, its people, individuals with strong backgrounds and expertise were placed in leadership roles to build on the Agency's momentum in its five-year strategic plan.

Renysa Brown, Lieutenant Colonel, USA (Retired) will serve as the **Veterans Accountability Unit (VAU) Director**. LTC Brown was recently appointed by Governor JB Pritzker as the first to serve in this newly created position. She continues her state service after her most recent assignment at the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) where she served as a Division Chief since 2019. Prior to that, she worked as a Bureau Chief at the Illinois Department of Human Services following her work as the Chief of Staff at IDVA. LTC Brown is a combat veteran of two conflicts having served in the United States Army and Illinois Army National Guard where she holds the distinction of commanding the largest battalion in the Illinois Army National Guard. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Fashion Merchandising from Western Illinois University and a Master of Arts in Procurement and Acquisitions Management from Webster University. LTC Brown and the VAU will operate independently of the IDVA to assess and report complaints, allegations, and possible cases of misconduct to the Office of the Inspector General for the agencies of the Illinois Governor.

Stephanie Heckenkamp, joined IDVA as its **Chief Fiscal Officer**. Prior to joining IDVA, Stephanie served as the Acting CFO at the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board and brings additional state fiscal leadership experience from her time at the Illinois Department of Revenue and Liquor Control Commission. Stephanie has built productive teams, both in state government and in the private sector, and her primary focus will be to lead the Agency's fiscal department assigned to six locations across Illinois.

Alicia Harris, joined IDVA as its new **Labor Relations Administrator**. Alicia comes to IDVA with nearly 20 years of state service, her most recent role as Labor Relations Specialist and Training Coordinator for the Illinois Department of Revenue. In addition to her work in labor relations, she has experience in management, legislation, and communications. She holds a master's degree in public administration, with certificates in Public Sector Labor Relations and Mediation. Her goals are to help unify the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs' practices statewide, create a more engaged workforce, and maintain positive union relations.





VSO Melissa Downey



Veterans' Home at Quincy



Veterans' Home at Quincy



Veterans' Home at Manteno



Veterans' Home at Manteno

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

ANTHONY HERNANDEZ, VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER

Anthony Hernandez, Veteran Service Officer, was awarded the IDVA Employee of the Year Award for 2022 for going above and beyond his main duties of preparing disability claims for submission to the VA by handling 23 additional cases of constituent concerns from the Governor's office and other elected officials. He also stepped in to support several itinerant offices in Cook County and surrounding communities. Anthony is well-known in the community through his regular attendance at local veteran events and resource fairs. He works hard to find the right answers for veterans and their families. Anthony represents the ideals of TEAM IDVA by placing veterans and their families at the center of everything he does.



Other nominees:

- Chad Ballinger – Quincy Home
- Kenneth Bonner – Field Division
- Tanya Fordahl – Manteno Home
- Allison Fox – LaSalle Home
- Jill Giovanine – LaSalle Home
- David Hall – Quincy Home
- Alfred Hollis – Prince Home
- Bill Hunt – IDVA HQ Springfield
- Lindsey Kelley – Quincy Home
- George Ruiz – Manteno Home
- Michelle Shear – Manteno Home
- Laura Torres – Manteno Home
- Jessica Williams – Quincy Home



WOMEN VETERANS

The Women Veterans Program advocates for Women Veterans in the areas including compensation, rehabilitation, outreach healthcare, and other issues facing Women Veterans in the community. In this role, the Senior Program Manager for the Women Veterans Program determines policy, program objectives, program standards, service output, and program services.

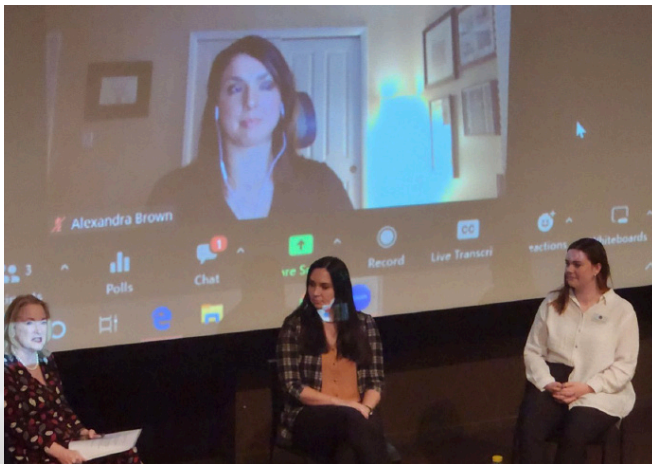
Through community engagement, the Women Veterans Coordinator partners with local, state, national, and federal organizations to establish a full-bodied outreach program to address the needs of Women Veterans and develop networks for support.



Director Prince with members of National Women Veterans United on Memorial Day.

Women's Veterans Stand Down

National Louis University, National Women Veterans United, and the University of Chicago, along with partner organizations across the state, hosted a Women Veterans Stand Down event on March 25, 2023. The event offered helpful resources and information for Women Veterans. The program also included influential women veterans who shared their stories and ideas. IDVA hosted a site in Springfield, IL.



Veterans Day

Kourtney Hopkins, (former) Women Veterans Coordinator, participates in a Women Veterans Day panel at Loyola University Chicago.

<https://veterans.illinois.gov/programs/women.html>



The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs joined an Interagency Task Force with the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness to develop a plan to prevent and end homelessness in Illinois. The key purpose of the Task Force is to coordinate strategy, effort, and impact in programs for persons experiencing homelessness and housing instabilities. In partnership with the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, IDVA has developed agency-specific commitments dedicated to preventing Veteran homelessness. On June 30, 2022, Director Terry Prince attended the Interagency Task

Force Meeting on Homelessness at the Matthew House in South Chicago. The Matthew House is a drop-in center for persons experiencing homelessness and provides a variety of services to the community. Here, the Interagency Task Force had the opportunity to hear impactful stories from persons experiencing homelessness, their needs, and how the Matthew House has helped them in their time of need. IDVA also heard directly from system leaders and service providers who are all on the same mission to end homelessness in Illinois. To learn more about the Matthew House please visit [Matthew House Chicago \(mhchicago.org\)](http://Matthew House Chicago (mhchicago.org)).

VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION

Governor's Challenge: The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs is dedicated to statewide efforts to end veteran suicide and is a proud partner of the Illinois Governor's Challenge, a campaign to prevent suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF). The Governor's Challenge is encouraging people from across the state to become part of this crusade to prevent suicide among SMVF. Over the course of the year, it created messaging disseminated through press releases, PSAs, social media, and events. The three-pronged approach includes:

- Hear the call: look for warning signs of crisis
- Spread the word: share relevant information
- Increase safety by all means: reduce access to lethal means

IDVA has helped develop messaging and external communications including PSAs, social media, news releases, and events. Director Prince has been directly involved in strategy and delivering of messages.

The Governor's Challenge also launched its training portal for people to become trained in suicide prevention. Its ambitious goal is to train 70,000 medical professionals, including hospital staff, primary care physicians, police, fire, EMTs, and correctional officers, state and local Veteran Service Organizations, social workers and therapists, workplace leaders, school principals, teachers and counselors, faith leaders, and others interested in joining this effort.



Fact: Firearms and medications are used in over half of suicides. Securing weapons and medications can decrease suicide rates.

Increase safety by all means for everyone. Visit governorschallenge.illinois.gov

To get help for yourself or someone you know, contact the Military & Veterans Crisis Line:

CALL: 988, ENTER 1

TEXT: 838255

ILLINOIS GOVERNOR'S CHALLENGE
Preventing Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families

Please take a moment to view this message from Director Prince and learn more about the Governor's Challenge: www.governorschallenge.illinois.gov.

Illinois Warrior Assistance Program

IDVA entered a one-year contract with Illinois Joining Forces to execute the Illinois Warrior Assistance Program (IWAP), a 24/7 warm helpline and resource for Illinois Veterans, their families, and caregivers. This free and confidential service was initiated by the State of Illinois in 2011 to assist Veterans transitioning from military service and challenged with PTSD, mild TBI, military sexual trauma, stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, substance abuse, and overall emotional wellness.

IWAP provides the following services:

- Access to a 24/7 warm helpline
- Resource navigation
- Case management which includes assessment, case planning, implementation (service connection), monitoring, and follow-up
- Referral to behavioral health services placement after 24/7 access to a warm helpline



The confidential warm helpline number is 877-455-IWAP (4297), and the website is www.Illinoiswarrior.org. The warm helpline is not a hotline, crisis line, or suicide prevention line. Those in crisis should call, 988 and select one (1), or dial 911.

Other Related Activities

IDVA is actively involved with K9s for Veterans in educating Veterans about the benefits of a service dog through their educational programming and events, particularly presentation of service dogs to their owner and ceremonies at the Forgotten Warrior Memorial remembering those who have lost the battle with PTSD.

IDVA will continue to engage whole heartedly with all efforts directed at preventing veteran suicide.

Veteran Service-Related Ailments Task Force

The Veterans Service-Related Ailments Task Force began in February 2022 and dissolved in December 2023. The Task Force members met bimonthly, and they were charged with two specific tasks:

- 1) Reviewing and making recommendations regarding veterans' service-related ailments that are not recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, including exploring why certain service-related ailments are not recognized and determining what may be done to have them recognized. AND
- 2) Assessing the way the State of Illinois can improve the rate at which disability compensation claims are approved by the federal government and correct the disparity between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' approval of disability compensation for Illinois Veterans and that which is approved for veterans in other states.

At the end of its first year, the Task Force submitted a report that summarized its work and made recommendations. This was submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31, 2022, and can be found here. <https://veterans.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/veterans/about-us/documents/ailments-task-force-information/service-related-ailments-task-force-report-2022.pdf>

Near the midpoint of its second year, in May 2023, the Task Force participated in a House Veterans' Affairs Committee subject matter hearing on the report.

The Task Force's final work consisted of reviewing the number of veterans service officers across the State and determining, geographically, where more veteran service officers may be needed.

ANNA, CHICAGO, LA SALLE, MANTENO, AND QUINCY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Each Illinois Veterans' Home is staffed with caring and dedicated professionals who provide quality long-term care and services to each resident. Our goal is to ensure that each resident experiences the highest possible quality of life, every single day. Additionally, the Homes are supported by dedicated volunteers from the local communities and veterans' organizations who provide many additional supporting services and activities, which enhances the lives of veterans tremendously.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS

The Illinois Veterans' Homes are subject to the regulatory standards of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and undergo annual licensure and certification inspections by both agencies in areas of resident care, quality, and safety.

ELIGIBILITY

Any honorably discharged veteran is entitled to admission if he or she:

- Has served in the U.S. Armed Forces at least one day during a period recognized by the USDVA as a war period or served in a hostile fire environment and was awarded a campaign or expeditionary medal; or
- Was retired for a service-connected disability or injury; or
- Has served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for 24 months of continuous service or more and enlisted after September 7, 1980; or
- Has served as a Reservist or National Guard member, and the service included being called to Federal Active Duty (excluding service for Active-Duty Training only) and completed the term or completed 20 years of satisfactory service and is otherwise eligible to receive reserve or active-duty retirement benefits; or
- Has been discharged for reasons of hardship or released from active duty due to a reduction in the U.S. Armed Forces before the completion of the required period of service; and
- Entered the service as a resident of Illinois or has been a resident of Illinois for one year immediately preceding the date of application for admission; and
- Is disabled by disease, wounds, or otherwise, and because of disability is incapable of earning a living.

Peacetime veterans with one year of honorable military service may also be eligible for admission, and other qualifying conditions, as required, must be met.

Admission to an Illinois Veterans' Home is based upon:

- The ability of the Home to provide adequate and appropriate care and services required by the person's medical diagnoses and assessed needs, and:
- An available bed in the category required by the veteran's medical conditions and assessed needs.

DOMICILIARY CARE

Our Homes in Anna and Quincy have independent living domiciliary services which are open to eligible Veterans, non-veteran Spouses, and



Director Prince and Senior Home Administrator Angela Simmons visited the Marion VA Hospital as part of IDVA's continued partnership with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. (USDVA). Each of IDVA's Homes is connected to a VA Hospital with the Marion VA Hospital serving the Veterans' Home at Anna. For the first time, quarterly meetings have been planned to strengthen communication and ensure seamless care for the Veterans at the Anna Home.

National Guard or Reserve Forces of the United States who have completed 20 years of satisfactory service and are eligible to receive reserve or active-duty retirement benefits.

WAITING LISTS

When required, waiting lists are established by each Home. Veterans whose applications are accepted, but who cannot be immediately admitted to the facility, are placed on the facility waiting list and are prioritized on a "first come-first served" basis. COVID-19 and staffing concerns have impacted admissions of each home as measures were taken to ensure safe admissions.

Separate waiting lists are prepared for general Skilled Care, Special Needs Care, and Domiciliary, if there are separate units for this type of care.

ADMISSION PRIORITIES

Priority is to serve wartime veterans. If there are no eligible wartime Veterans on the waiting list, the second priority is given to peacetime Veterans. At homes located in Anna and Quincy, spouses of residents or widows of Veterans who are otherwise eligible for admission are eligible for admission to domiciliary units when there are no wartime or peacetime Veterans on the waiting list.

COSTS OF CARE

Residents pay a monthly maintenance fee based on individual income and ability to pay. The monthly charge covers room, food (including special diets and supplements), medication, medical care, recreation and activities, and some special therapy or treatments prescribed by the attending physician.

Those residents whose income and assets are within the guidelines specified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) may qualify for an Aid & Attendance (A&A) allowance. Residents who receive this allowance will pay an additional, separate A&A charge, in addition to the monthly maintenance fee. The A&A charge is equal to the amount of the allowance provided by the USDVA.

Some costs of care that are not covered include but may not be limited to: Durable Medical Equipment such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, dental care, prostheses, and special wheelchairs or mechanical devices. Such costs must be paid directly to the providers by the resident or responsible party.

The cost of care is met through a combination of the maintenance fee paid by each resident, per diem granted by USDVA and appropriated general revenue funds (GRF).

ACTIVITIES

The Homes provide a full range of social and therapeutic activities for residents, both inside and outside of the home and encourage residents to participate in as many of the activities and programs as possible. Some examples of activities include card games, bingo parties, cooking and crafts, religious services, exercise and fitness, entertainment, and outdoor activities. COVID-19 restricted many activities, however, the administrators adapted to provide as much activity as possible.

Representatives of national, state, and local Veterans' organizations frequently visit the Homes, Resident Advisory Groups (RAG) and Veterans' Advisory Councils (VAC) at each Home, work to assure that quality standards are maintained, and that the special needs of our Veterans are always met.

VOLUNTEER WEEK

IDVA's five Veterans' Homes across the state – Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy – are enhanced by the extraordinary contributions of volunteers in their homes. They bring energy, creativity, and compassion through acts of kindness from assisting with projects, visits, serving food, and accompanying veterans to doctor's appointments. IDVA treasures their time and talent and thank them not just during Volunteers Week, but every day.



VETERANS' HOME AT ANNA

The Illinois Veterans' Home at Anna (IVH-Anna) is a 50-bed, skilled care nursing facility with six apartments. Situated on a 16.1-acre site in Union County, the Home provides long-term skilled nursing care services, rehabilitative, and social services. The smallest Illinois Veterans' Home, it is home to 50 skilled nursing residents and 12 residents in domiciliary units.

The Home has a staff of 88 employees who strive to provide individualized care in a homelike environment, by focusing on the wellness and strengths of each person that lives there. They do this through various activities based on individual capabilities.

The Illinois Veterans' Home-Anna offers numerous activities of interest to residents, thanks in part to the strong support and assistance of dedicated volunteers from veterans' organizations and the community. In addition, IVH-Anna members enjoy the serenity and peacefulness of a Sensory Garden designed specifically for residents with Alzheimer's and related dementia.

Today, the home is undergoing a nearly \$3 million construction project slated for completion in 2025. The project includes replacing HVAC units on the rooftop and resident's rooms, windows in the residents' rooms, and replacing metal doors with glass doors. It will also include conversion of bathing areas into a spa-like atmosphere with spa tubs and special lighting. Additionally, it will include renovation of a public restroom and new lighting in outside common areas. These renovations will elevate the residents' daily comfort and the new windows and doors will brighten bedrooms and living spaces. This project is part of the state's commitment to investing in the five Veterans' Homes across the state to ensure residents live in well-maintained and modern homes.



VETERANS' HOME AT CHICAGO

The Illinois Veterans Home at Chicago, located at 4250 N. Oak Park Avenue in Chicago, is a 200-private room and bath home for veterans seeking skilled residential care, including accommodations for those requiring memory care support. Its open floor plan creates community around pods of living and dining spaces. The \$121 million home was funded by Rebuild Illinois and opened in January 2022 with limited capacity as it awaited final accreditation by the USDVA. The

accreditation was approved, and the home has been actively admitting additional residents and hiring staff to care for the residents.

Residents have access to a library, barber shop, bank, and a rehabilitation center. Housekeeping, laundry, and dietary ensure the residents day-to-day personal needs are met. An IDVA Veterans Service Officer is available to assist the veteran with questions regarding state and federal benefits. Outdoor areas include a lushly planted garden with a walking path and benches, and a garden terrace. The multi-purpose room is the gathering place for events and family occasions.

Local artist Indira Johnson created custom, interactive artwork for every floor themed, "Helping Hands," to reflect the commitment of each medical professional and staff caring for their resident veterans.



VETERANS' HOME AT LASALLE

The Illinois Veterans' Home at LaSalle opened on December 12, 1990, and can house 190 veterans in both general skilled care and special needs unit providing care to residents suffering from dementia related health issues.

The home provides comprehensive, quality, skilled nursing care to the veterans who live there, with the goal to promote the highest possible quality of life for each individual member.

Residents and their families are free to enjoy five secure, landscaped, outdoor courtyards for fresh air. A full range of rehabilitation services are provided to assist Veterans in meeting their needs.

The Home has a complete staff of medical, nursing, social service, and activity personnel. Ancillary services such as physical, speech, and occupational therapies are available at the Home through contractual arrangements with specialists in the community.



Veterans' Home at Manteno

The Illinois Veterans' Home at Manteno celebrated its 33rd year of service and continues to serve many northern and central Illinois veterans. It is located on 122-acre campus 60 miles south of Chicago. Approximately 143 acres of additional property is farmed with the proceeds of that lease being placed in the Manteno Home Fund.

The Home provides a comfortable residence for the veterans in a peaceful rural setting and has a post office, library, bank, and beauty/barber shop, which services up to 294 residents. The campus features a 1 ½ acre man-made pond that is stocked and landscaped, with a pavilion where Veterans can enjoy the outdoors and "catch- and-release" fishing.

The home has a complete in-house medical staff to provide the full range of professional nursing care for veterans. Residents who may require acute hospital services such as surgery, advanced diagnostic workups, or other specialized treatments receive this care at the USDVA Medical Center at Hines. Two community hospitals in Kankakee, IL also provide acute and emergency care. Skilled, professional staff members are assisted by a large contingent of dedicated volunteers from local Veterans and civic organizations. Weekly religious services of all faiths are held in the facility chapel. The Activities and Volunteer Services Departments provide residents with a variety of social and recreational activities.





VETERANS' HOME AT QUINCY

In 1886, the 34th Illinois General Assembly passed legislation to establish a Soldiers' and Sailors' Home for disabled Illinois Veterans of the Mexican and Civil Wars. On June 1, 1886, Governor Richard Oglesby, selected Quincy as the site of the new home. On October 19, 1886, the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailor's Home was formally dedicated. In June 1973, the name was changed to the Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy.

It is the largest and oldest Veterans' home of the five in Illinois and one of the largest in the country. Today, more than 250 residents call the facility home and represent most of the 102 counties in Illinois. It provides domiciliary and skilled nursing care to Illinois veterans, their spouses, and widows/widowers.

The Quincy Home offers levels of healthcare ranging from 80 domiciliary beds to skilled nursing care for up to 386 Veterans, with units for those veterans who have special needs. Full-time physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Veteran Nursing Assistants-Certified (CNAs) provide 24-hour a day, 7-days a week care. In addition to the extensive medical department, the Home has social services, activities, dietary, laundry, housekeeping, security, and maintenance departments.

The Home is currently well into a nearly \$300 million construction project including a campus rehabilitation to buildings, infrastructure, utilities, and landscaping to support the new facilities. The project provides for the demolition of six existing buildings, and renovation of the Neilson Dining Facility to include a multi-purpose space, administrative offices, and stores. The long-term care facility is projected to house 210 skilled care beds, with full amenities for its residents. The independent living building, referred to as a domiciliary, will host 80 independent living units, with accommodations large enough for resident spouses. The Quincy construction project considered the long-term vision of the Veterans' Home's core purpose and functions, while preserving and improving the overall character of the campus environment.

The project represents a federal-state partnership between the federal VA, the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Capital Development Board. The federal VA covers 65% of the total cost of the \$299,635,000 project while the state of Illinois is responsible for the 35% balance.

BEAM TOPPING CEREMONY

The final structural beam was placed at the Veterans' Home at Quincy at a ceremony featuring Governor JB Pritzker, IDVA Director Terry Prince, Capital Development Board Executive Director Jim Underwood, and Home Superintendent Troy Culbertson on January 12th. The Topping Out Ceremony marked a significant milestone in the nearly \$300 million renovation and rehabilitation project.

During the Topping Out Ceremony, the last structural beam, signed by residents, staff, construction workers, and dignitaries, was raised and placed at the top of the long-term care facility.



The Prince Home



Located on the grounds of the Manteno Veterans' Home, the Prince Home for homeless and disabled Veterans is a separate program with a dedicated staff and program director. The Prince Home opened in 2007 to provide permanent supportive housing for men and women Veterans in its 15-bed facility.

The Prince Home staff provides each resident with the skills needed for successful independent living. The Home provides a structured, safe, and caring environment, which instills a sense of dignity, belonging, and achievement, enhancing the opportunity to succeed. The Prince Home vision is for residents to leave the program with the confidence to achieve full-time employment, independent housing, and sobriety.

The Home's leadership advocates for homeless Veterans statewide through networks with county and city governments, various state agencies, religious institutions, private and community organizations, the USDVA, and state-wide Veterans' organizations.

CNAs

During the week of June 16-22, 2023, IDVA celebrated Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and recognized them for their skilled and compassionate care they deliver to veterans in the homes.



Hiring Campaign

Similar to health care providers across the nation, IDVA embarked on an aggressive hiring campaign for the Homes and the Field through social media, newsletter ads, and hiring fairs.

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs is hiring Veteran Service Officers

IDVA is recruiting combat-era Veterans eager to help Veterans, retirees, spouses, and dependents obtain their earned federal and state benefits and services.

In this role, the VSO will:

- Work one-on-one with Veterans to identify the benefits and services that will help them achieve their goals including employment, education, housing, and healthcare.
- Partner with county, state, and federal agencies to ensure Veterans have access to all available benefits and resources.
- Represent IDVA at community events to educate Veterans about IDVA and how it is poised to serve them.
- Receive comprehensive training.
- Be part of a community of Veteran Service Officers dedicated to supporting, advocating, and serving Illinois 600,000 Veterans.

For more information and to apply:

CNA - Veterans' Nursing Assistant RNs - Registered Nurses

Join Us in Caring for Heroes at the Illinois Veterans' Homes!

Excellent opportunity to work in a caring, supportive community.

Anna Veterans' Home
618-202-6012 - Human Resources

Chicago Veterans' Home
773-824-3876 - Human Resources

LaSalle Veterans' Home
815-410-8390 - Human Resources

Manteno Veterans' Home
815-907-3530 - Human Resources

Quincy Veterans' Home
217-222-8641 - Administration

For job postings visit:
Careers at State of Illinois (work.illinois.gov)

Illinois Veterans' Advisory Council

The Illinois Veterans' Advisory Council (IVAC) was established effective July 1, 2004, by Public Act 093-0779. In accordance with the Act, council members include:

- Four members of the General Assembly, appointed one each by the President of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, preferably from a legislative or representative district in which a state-operated Veterans' home is located.
- Six Veterans appointed by the Director of Veterans' Affairs.
- One Veteran appointed by the commander or president of each Veteran Service Organization that is chartered by the federal government and by the State of Illinois and that elects to appoint an IVAC member.

In December 2022, new leadership was elected to the IVAC board: Keith Wetherell, Chairman and Robert Tyler, Vice Chairman.

Public Act 96-1266 increased the council Membership to include:

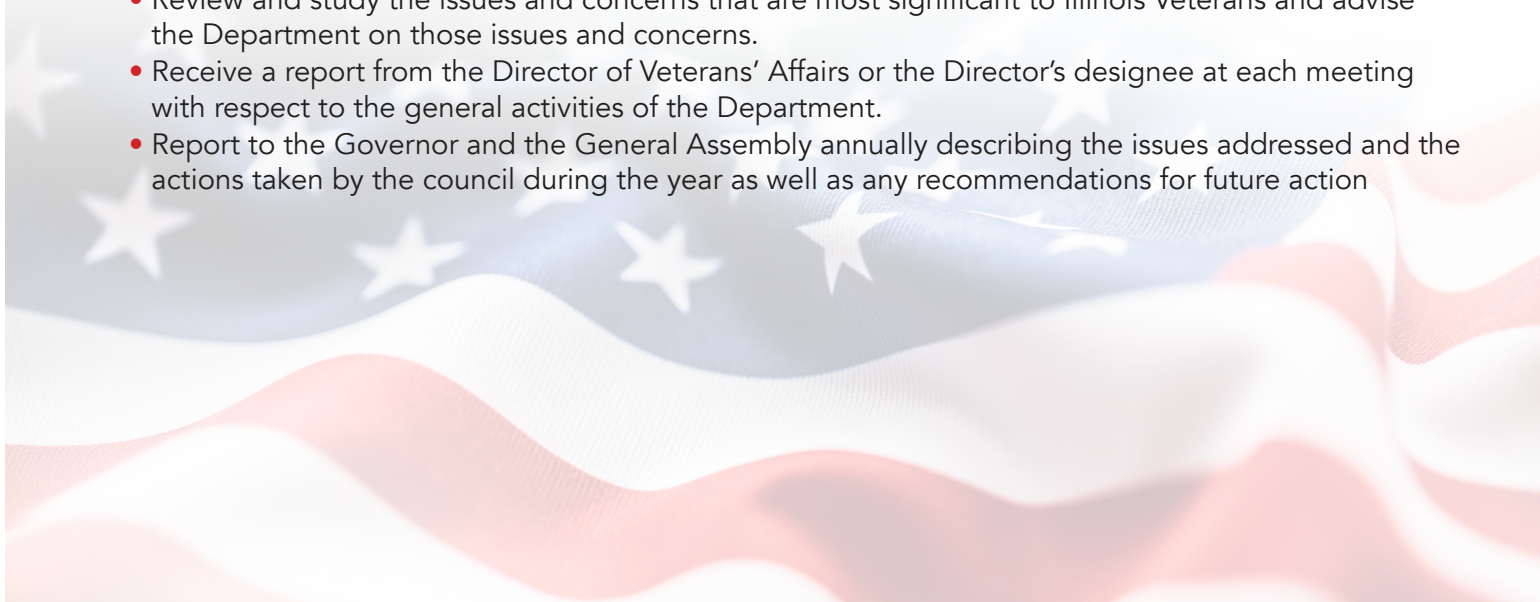
- One person appointed by the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard,
- One person appointed by the Illinois Attorney General
- One person appointed by the Illinois Secretary of State
- One person appointed by the Director of the Illinois Department of Employment Security
- One person appointed by each military family organization that is chartered by the federal government.

In addition, no member of the council shall be an employee or representative of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Members of the Council serve without compensation or reimbursement. The Council meets quarterly as required and is available to meet at the call of the Chair or at the call of the Director of Veterans' Affairs or the Governor. The Department provides meeting space and clerical and administrative support services for the Council.

The Council is empowered to:

- Advise the Department of Veterans' Affairs with respect to the fulfillment of its statutory duties.
- Review and study the issues and concerns that are most significant to Illinois Veterans and advise the Department on those issues and concerns.
- Receive a report from the Director of Veterans' Affairs or the Director's designee at each meeting with respect to the general activities of the Department.
- Report to the Governor and the General Assembly annually describing the issues addressed and the actions taken by the council during the year as well as any recommendations for future action





Illinois Joining Forces

Many members of Field Services attended the Illinois Joining Forces (IJF) Annual Summit, "Connect Illinois," where ideas were exchanged and information shared. IDVA values the partnership of IJF and the other Veteran Service Organizations with the shared mission of elevating the lives of veterans in Illinois. The Summit was highly focused on veteran suicide prevention where participants learned from experts about the warning signs of suicide and how to find help for those in crisis. Breakout sessions focused on women Veterans and homelessness. IDVA appreciates the opportunity to participate in this annual summit, which brings together the best in the industry.

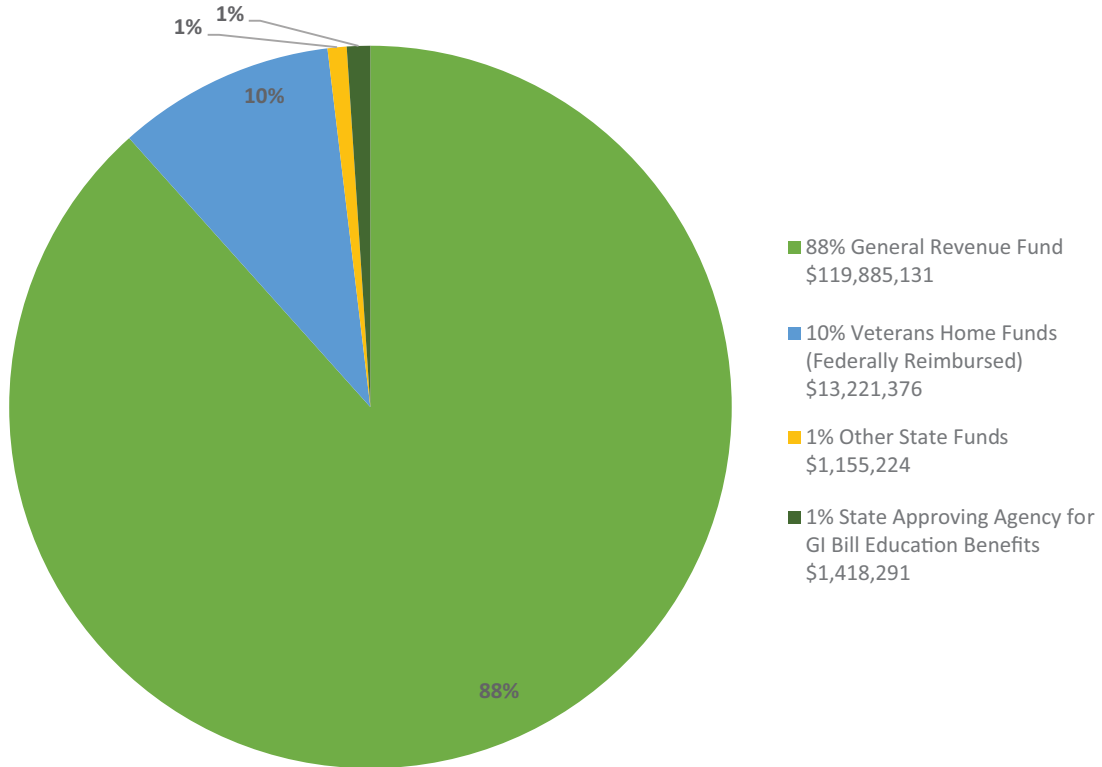


Robert Iverson, Melissa Beckford, Mark Patterson, and Jeffrey Lewis attend the Illinois Joining Forces Summit.

www.illinoisjoiningforces.org



Expenditures by Funding Source



Expenditures by Program

