

Overview

A shared endeavor of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs and Department of Veterans' Affairs, Illinois Joining Forces (IJF) is a state-wide public and private organizational network focusing on active collaboration, transparency and navigability of resources, and improved service delivery for the State's military and veteran communities.

On November 9, 2012, more than 250 leaders of public institutions and private organizations participated in the Illinois Joining Forces Launch Summit, where they worked together via Working Groups to establish concrete goals and action plans for training, education and greater collaboration that will improve support for service members, veterans, and their families across Illinois. Following the Summit, IJF Working Groups have already scheduled and held follow-up meetings with to begin implementation of these plans.

On November 19, 2012 the online platform, www.IllinoisJoiningForces.org was launched as a tool to facilitate knowledge sharing, active collaboration, and robust referrals among Illinois Joining Forces members and Working Groups; the website will also serve as a public resource to provide information and referrals on services to veterans, service members, and their families. Even as the nascent website continues to roll out, over 140 organizations are participating on the website, including federal, state, county and city agencies as well as scores of not-for-profit organizations. IJF members commit to using the website regularly, thus self-maintaining their profiles and ensuring that the database of information on programs, services, and events is timely and relevant.

Objectives

Illinois Joining Forces is enabling:

Robust active collaboration among scores of organizations otherwise unaware of each other's work;

Increased effectiveness of the many resources provided by veteran and military related organizations in Illinois through transparency and navigability;

A network of organizations with improved capacity, awareness, and intra-network referrals; and

Production of practical, effective policy recommendations to be included in the annual report of the Illinois Discharged Service Member Task Force.

Structure

Illinois joining forces will serve as a coordination focal point for organizations across Illinois, which in turn will lead to a more navigable system of support for service members, veterans and their families. This will be accomplished via the Illinois Joining Forces online platform, as well as through the creation of several issues-focused Illinois Joining Forces Working Groups, which will capitalize on the cross-sector expertise and perspectives of participating organizations: Homelessness and Housing; Education; Employment and Job Training; Behavioral Health; Disability Benefits; Access to Medical Care; Financial Literacy; Families and Children; Emergency Assistance and Legal Support.