

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, November 11, 2022

CONTACT

Marisa Kollias

marisa.kollias@illinois.gov

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

New initiative will develop and implement suicide prevention best practices across state

SPRINGFIELD - This November, as the nation celebrates Veterans Day, the Illinois Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families is launching its public education campaign to prevent suicide in the Illinois military community. The Illinois Governor's Challenge is developing and implementing state-wide suicide prevention best practices for Service Members Veterans and their Families (SMVF) and will provide suicide prevention education and resources for Illinois communities.

According to the Center for Disease Control, suicide is the 12th leading cause of death in the United States. Veterans are especially at risk of death by suicide with roughly 20 Veterans dying by suicide every day.

"Suicide is a public health emergency claiming far too many lives—especially among our military community," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "So, as we commemorate Veteran's Day, I am proud to launch the Illinois Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families—a public education campaign serving our military community. The best way to honor our veterans is by providing them with the mental health support they deserve, all while equipping Illinoisans with the resources and tools they need to support servicemembers who are experiencing mental health crises."

The Illinois Governor's Challenge is part of the Governor's and Mayor's Challenges to Prevent Suicide Among SMVF, a national effort that champions mental health support and preventative services. The Governor's and Mayor's Challenges is a partnership with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For the Governor's Challenge, 52 states and territories are taking part in the challenge and are working to develop and implement state-wide suicide prevention best practices for SMVF, using a public health approach.

"Illinois veterans are the best of us, and we will give our best effort and investment to support them and their families," **Grace B. Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services said.** "This initiative is a step forward in our efforts to end tragic suicides among veterans and position Illinois a home where every veteran and their family can access resources, healthcare and services they need.

"Suicide among Veterans and Service Members is tragic, frequent, and most important-- it is preventable." **said Dr. Teresa Glaze, Ph.D., LCSW**, team leader of the Illinois Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families. "Listening compassionately, speaking up, and increasing our knowledge of risk factors are some of the ways that we as a community can keep each other safe."

The Illinois Governor's Challenge is a partnership between the Illinois Department of Human Services-Division of Mental Health (IDHS-DMH) and the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA).

"Preventing suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families is a challenge, but we're here to tell you that help is available," **said Terry Prince, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs.** "We invite everyone in Illinois to join us in supporting Service Members, Veterans, and military families because we all have a role to play in preventing suicide. When we commit to showing up, building knowledge, and reaching out with compassion, we can save lives."

To learn more about preventing suicide among Illinois Service Members, Veterans and their Families, visit www.governorchallenge.illinois.gov. If you or someone you know is in crisis, contact the Military & Veterans crisis line. Dial 988, then press one, or text 838255. You do not need to be enrolled in federal VA services to use this number.