



VETERANS AFFAIRS



National Suicide Prevention Month

Dear Veterans, Families, and Members of Our Community,

Each September, our nation observes Suicide Prevention Month—a time to raise awareness, foster hope, and take meaningful action to save lives. For us, this observance carries special weight as we focus on the well-being of our Veterans, service members, and families.

Suicide is a national public health crisis, but it affects the Veteran population at a disproportionately higher rate. According to the U.S. Department of VA 2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, Veterans accounted for 13.7% of all suicides in the U.S., even though they represent only about 6% of the adult population. Veterans are 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide than non-Veteran adults.

These numbers are more than statistics—they represent the lives of our brothers, sisters, friends, and loved ones. They reflect the invisible wounds of service, the weight of transition to civilian life, and challenges such as PTSD, chronic pain, moral injury, and social isolation. Most importantly, they remind us suicide is preventable, and help is always available.

If you or a Veteran you know is struggling, please remember these life-saving resources:

- Veterans Crisis Line – **Dial 988 and press 1**, or **text 838255** to connect with trained responders 24/7
- VA Mental Health Services – Comprehensive support for PTSD, depression, substance use, and other challenges. www.mentalhealth.va.gov
- VA S.A.V.E. Training – Free online training that teaches how to recognize warning signs and support Veterans in crisis: [VA S.A.V.E. Training](#)
- Vet Centers – Community-based counseling for combat Veterans, survivors of MST, and their families. **Call 877-927-8387**
- Make the Connection – Real stories and resources from Veterans who found a path to recovery. www.maketheconnection.net
- Military OneSource – Free, confidential 24/7 support for service members, Veterans, and families. **Call 800-342-9647**
- Local VA CBOC – Veterans can also call their local VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic directly for support: **1-877-626-2500 Ext 15567**
- Local Emergency Services – In immediate danger, **Dial 911**

This month and every month, let's commit to being present, checking in with those around us, and spreading the word that no one fights alone. Together, we can build a stronger community of hope and healing for every Veteran and their loved ones.

Jessica
Jessica Walker
Director

Highlights

PA CareerLink
Day

Walk For A
Wonderful Life

POW Inspires
Veterans

Login.gov or
ID.me

Reducing Risk

Armed Forces
Travel

VA Pension Benefits

Pennsylvania CareerLink™ 300 INDIAN SPRINGS ROAD
INDIANA, PA 15701
724-471-7220

join us!
SEPTEMBER 11, 2025
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

INDIANA PA CAREERLINK® DAY

CAREER SERVICES
GIVEAWAYS
MUSIC & PRIZE WHEEL
HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES
INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
FOOD TRUCK
STATE EMPLOYMENT RECRUITMENT
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A proud partner of the American Job Center network

PA CareerLink® is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs are federally funded dollars. For federal funding information, visit <https://hricksonline.org/about-us/careerlink>

SERVING VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS,
AND THEIR FAMILIES IN NEED

**VETERANS
STAND DOWN**

FRIDAY, SEPT. 19 **VETERANS ONLY:**
10:00AM - 10:30AM
GENERAL ADMITTANCE:
10:30AM - 1:00PM

**KITTANNING TOWNSHIP
FIRE HALL**
13126 US-422, KITTANNING, PA 16201

FREE FOR VETS AND SERVICE MEMBERS:
DOOR PRIZES, HEALTHCARE SCREENINGS, LIGHT
REFRESHMENTS/SMALL LUNCH, HAIRCUTS, VA
COMPENSATION CLAIM ASSISTANCE,
COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES,
VA MOBILE VET CENTER & MORE!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
Matt Colian 724-471-7220 mcolian@pa.gov
Kathy Rashlich 724-548-3441 karashlich@co.armstrong.pa.us

**PROOF OF VETERAN
STATUS REQUIRED**

INDIANA COUNTY SUICIDE TASK FORCE
13TH ANNUAL
Walk For a Wonderful Life



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2025
11AM-12:30PM
IRMC MACK PARK, 752 S 6TH ST, INDIANA, PA 15701

 SCAN THE QR
CODE TO
PREREGISTER
ONLINE!!

Veteran Spotlight



DJ Strotman enlisted in the United States Army in 2003 as a 31B Military Police Officer. He deployed to Ar Ramadi, Iraq, where his platoon provided security for convoys, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams, and Engineer units as they cleared routes. His duties also included escort operations and providing security during Iraqi Police station inspections.

Today, DJ remains dedicated to serving others, especially his fellow Veterans. He actively participates in his community through the VFW Post 1989 Honor Guard, and he currently serves as the Senior Vice Commander of the post. When he's not fulfilling his leadership role, DJ enjoys spending time with and supporting fellow Veterans.

Indiana County VA Clinic
1-877-626-2500
When you hear the prompt "Welcome to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Altoona VA Medical Center", enter **extension 15567** to be transferred to the Indiana VA Clinic Operator

VA News and Information



POW inspires Veterans

On Aug. 6, 1972, during his 85th combat mission off the USS Midway, Penn was shot down and captured by enemy forces. He endured eight long months of brutal captivity in Hanoi, facing solitary confinement, beatings and starvation. He lost 60 pounds and struggled to recover from the injuries sustained in his plane crash. Defying the odds, he survived and returned home, opting to serve his country in the military for a few more years before embarking on a successful career as an airline pilot. However, his journey was not without challenges. Like many Veterans, Penn faced the invisible scars of war, battling PTSD and alcoholism. "I thought I could handle everything on my own," he admitted. "But I learned that we all have triggers we don't recognize." [Read More](#)

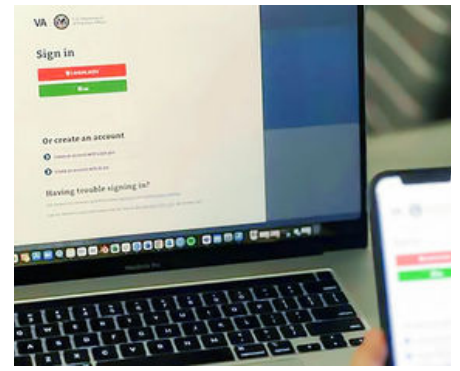


End-of-Life Planning

End-of-life planning is difficult but essential. VA provides benefits to help Veterans and families prepare, including life insurance options like VALife and VGLI for financial protection. Veterans can document health care preferences through Advance Care Planning, designating someone to advocate if they cannot.

Survivors may qualify for benefits such as Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, pensions, accrued benefits, and burial allowances. Burial and memorial benefits include interment in VA cemeteries, headstones, flags, and perpetual care. Veterans should organize key documents—DD214, insurance, care plans, and burial eligibility—for loved ones. [Read More](#)

To learn more visit [End-of-Life Benefits](#).



Login.gov or ID.me

After Sept. 30, 2025, Veterans must use Login.gov or ID.me to access VA.gov and VA mobile apps. DS Logon will be discontinued.

How to Transition

- Visit [Creating an account](#).
- Follow the [step-by-step guide](#)

Helpful Resources

- [Verifying your identity](#).
- [Support for common issues with Login.gov or ID.me](#).

Key Benefits

- Strong security against fraud.
- One account for VA and other government services.
- Meets Federal security standards.

Visit [VA Secure Sign-In Changes](#) for support and details.



Reducing risk for rural Veterans

When you think about rural living, you may picture quiet mornings, wide-open spaces, friendly neighbors and a slower pace of life. But just because rural life seems peaceful doesn't mean it has no challenges. People in rural communities, including Veterans, die by suicide at higher rates than people in cities. Why? Rural areas tend to have higher suicide risk factors, like greater access to lethal means, higher economic distress, lower quality of health care and remoteness that can lead to feelings of isolation. None of these things mean a suicide crisis will happen. But because nearly five million rural Veterans are at higher risk, VA is working to make access to care easier. And we're raising awareness about lethal means safety to make sure rural Veterans know how to create secure home environments. [Read More](#)



Gerofit helps Veterans

Offered at no cost to Veterans aged 65 and older who are enrolled in VA care, Gerofit is a structured exercise program that helps older Veterans improve strength, mobility and overall wellness. Whether it's returning to daily routines, reducing chronic pain or powering through a cross-country adventure, Gerofit is helping Veterans meet life where they are—and keep moving forward. Gerofit empowers Veterans to set personal goals, monitor their progress and make informed decisions about their physical well-being. Whether recovering from injury, coping with age-related changes, or pursuing adventures later in life, Veterans are showing what's possible when care, confidence and consistency come together. Veterans interested in Gerofit can ask their VA provider for a referral or consult the Gerofit exercise physiologist at their VA medical center. In-person and virtual options are available across the country. [Read More](#)

Resources



REP. JIM STRUZZI
62nd District



ROBERT MANZI
Indiana County DA



INDIANA SHERIFF
INDIANA BOROUGH PD



**CAR SEAT TESTING
DRUG TAKE-BACK BOX**

**DO YOU HAVE A
HARD-TO-READ
LICENSE PLATE?**

WE CAN HELP!

We are happy to announce our
illegible plate replacement event.




SATURDAY
Sept. 13, 2025
9:00 am - 12:00 noon



**INDIANA
COURTHOUSE
PARKING LOT**
825 PHILADELPHIA
STREET, INDIANA,
PA 15701


An officer from the Indiana Borough Police will be checking license plates and determining if replacement is needed.

Questions? Call Rep. Struzzi's office at 724-465-0220



American Forces Travel (AFT)

American Forces Travel (AFT), supported by Priceline, is the DOD's official online leisure travel site. AFT provides Veterans and service members with fast, easy access to exclusive discounts on flights, hotels, rental cars, cruises, and vacation packages, featuring privately negotiated deals from top travel brands worldwide. Save up to 60% on hotels and 80% on cruises with AFT. Learn more at americanforcetravel.com.



Cornerstone Caregiving In-Home Veteran Care

The Cornerstone Caregiving Veterans Program offers comprehensive non-medical, in-home care tailored specifically for Veterans **at no-cost through the VA**. Partnering with the Veterans Affairs program, Cornerstone ensures Veterans receive the support they need to live comfortably at home. The program includes assistance with daily activities, personalized care plans, and guidance through the VA benefits enrollment process. This service honors Veterans' service by providing compassionate, respectful care, allowing them to maintain their independence and dignity in their own homes.

[Visit Cornerstone Caregiving](http://www.cornerstonecaregiving.com)

VA Pension Benefits

The VA Pension is a tax-free benefit designed to provide financial assistance to wartime Veterans, surviving spouses, and dependent children with limited income or resources. This benefit can help supplement income and provide greater financial security.

Eligible individuals include wartime Veterans age 65 or older, or those with a permanent and total non-service-connected disability, as well as surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of deceased wartime Veterans. Veterans with significant disabilities may qualify for higher payments through Special Monthly Pension, Housebound, or Aid & Attendance benefits.

To qualify, Veterans must have served at least 90 days of active duty, including one day during a recognized wartime period, and meet VA income and net worth limits. Surviving spouses and dependent children must also meet these financial requirements.

Applicants will need proof of military service, financial documentation, medical records (if applicable), and supporting documents such as marriage or death certificates. To receive assistance with filing a claim, you or your surviving spouse must sign VA Form 21-22, appointing our Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to help manage your application and communicate with the VA on your behalf.

For guidance and to schedule an appointment, call our office at (724) 465-3815. We are here to support you every step of the way and ensure you receive the benefits you've earned.



supporting our Nation's Heroes

Heroes to Hives is the nation's largest agriculture training program for US military service members. Our FREE 9-month online intensive beginning beekeeping education course is designed to train US service members in the art and science of beekeeping to prepare them to be successful in the beekeeping industry as a hobby, a career, or as a therapeutic practice. Since 2015, Heroes to Hives has trained over 15,000 Service Members and their dependents from all over the world. Click [HERE](http://www.indianacountypa.gov/departments/veteran-affairs/) to learn more about our educational offerings.

Thank you for reading!

Indiana County Department of Veterans Affairs	(724) 465-3815
https://www.indianacountypa.gov/departments/veteran-affairs/	825 Philadelphia Street Second Floor, Court House Indiana, PA 15701

