

FAQs

IAFF Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery



What is the IAFF Center for Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery?

The concept is the first of its kind for our profession and our union – a facility that provides a highly specialized program exclusively for our members and treats post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other behavioral health issues in a residential setting. With the help of Advanced Recovery Systems (ARS), a leader in behavioral healthcare management, the Center of Excellence will be staffed by a highly experienced and specialized team to treat the complex needs of fire fighters seeking recovery from PTSD and co-occurring addictions. The Center will also be used to train and educate peer support members, conduct additional research on PTSD and develop needed protocols for fire departments.

Why is the IAFF working to develop a Center of Excellence?

A staggering number of members deal with various mental health and stress-related conditions, while the services for peer counseling, sound diagnosis and treatment are limited. Our members are struggling with PTSD, depression, anxiety and substance abuse and want trusted treatment professionals who understand the culture and the unique pressures of our job. The Center of Excellence will offer evidence-based treatment for successful recovery that will help them return to the job as quickly as possible. Equally important, the Center of Excellence is a safe haven for talking with other fire fighters who face or have overcome similar challenges. No existing treatment facility provides this, and the IAFF intends to fill that critical void with a premier Center of Excellence that treats the special needs of our members.

Does the IAFF own and run this Center?

While the IAFF does not own or have any financial interest in the Center of Excellence, the IAFF will provide guidance to ensure that the program, treatment and services are tailored to the unique needs of our members. The General President has appointed an IAFF Advisory Committee comprised of trusted members and behavioral health experts who will be instrumental in the overall design and development of the Center and its program and will provide recommendations to ARS to ensure our members receive state-of-the-art services.

Who is Advanced Recovery Systems?

Advanced Recovery Systems (ARS) has a network of treatment centers throughout the United States that provide high-quality and client-centric behavioral health treatment. The company's Chairman of the Board and CEO are actively involved in developing the Center.

Where is the Center of Excellence located?

The Center is located outside Washington, DC in Prince George's County, Maryland. Given its proximity to airports in Baltimore and Washington, DC, members from across the U.S. and Canada can seek treatment.

Why would I go to Maryland for treatment?

The IAFF Center is a one-of-a-kind treatment facility dedicated to fire fighters. Designed from the ground-up, the Center will offer comprehensive, best-practice treatment. Staff will be experts on the types of trauma experienced by our members, including post-traumatic stress, that are a result of a critical incident or the cumulative effect of trauma exposure. The serene, wooded campus provides an opportunity for members to focus on treatment and make recovery their number-one priority. ARS works to transition members to ongoing support once they return home, regardless of where they live.

What makes this Center of Excellence unique for fire fighters?

Treatment plans are developed to meet the needs of our members seeking recovery from addiction, with an emphasis on post-traumatic stress, and will be staffed by clinicians who understand the fire service culture. Because our members feel most comfortable talking to other fire fighters, there is also a commitment to include members of the IAFF peer support program in education and research at the Center. The facility sits on a 15-acre campus designed to support fire fighters as they seek treatment and recovery and includes a state-of-the-art gym and other features that encourage physical activity (pool, basketball court, etc.) so that members can continue with their fitness regimen as a way to help with their recovery and prepare them to return to the job.

Are non-fire personnel also accepted as patients?

The IAFF Center of Excellence will focus solely on IAFF members.

What types of behavioral health problems will the Center address?

The Center will provide intensive treatment for PTSD and co-occurring clinical conditions that often accompany PTSD, such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse.

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If I'm only struggling with post-traumatic stress, can I still receive treatment at the Center?

ARS's experience is that most people with a post-traumatic stress diagnosis have co-occurring concerns. Due to insurance coverage restrictions, those with solely a post-traumatic stress diagnosis typically receive outpatient treatment, which is also provided by the Center.

What type of treatment is offered?

The Center will offer multiple levels of treatment to meet members' needs as they progress in their recovery, including:

- Detox (clinically-managed)
- Intensive in-patient (clinically managed)
- Residential care, including medical monitoring
- Partial Hospitalization (outpatient – five to seven hours per day onsite for six days)
- Outpatient Services, including group work with limited numbers (six to eight people)
- Twelve-step meetings are also an integral part of recovery for many individuals and will be available onsite.

How will be post-traumatic stress be addressed?

The Center will use evidence-based approaches to address post-traumatic stress, including cognitive-behavior therapy and exposure therapy. The Center also will offer other activities that can assist with recovery, including equine therapy and alternative therapies.

How long will I need to stay?

The length of stay is driven by the treatment plan and insurance authorization. Typically, treatment lasts four to six weeks, but may be more or less depending on the individual member. Staff is committed to providing the highest level of care and will design treatment plans that meet clinical needs of the patient. After-care services continue following a stay at the Center.

What happens when I return home?

The IAFF recognizes that follow-up to treatment is critical for long-term success. Center staff will work with members and their families to ensure a successful return to home and work and will help identify a support network, develop accountability plans and provide links with peer programs so that members continue with their recovery at home.

Will my insurance cover it?

The IAFF and ARS are committed to delivering comprehensive and effective treatment that produces positive outcomes for members. IAFF representatives are reaching out to the major insurance carriers to explain the Center's cost-effective approach and to promote insurance coverage for this level of care. In some jurisdictions, current insurance plans already provide comprehensive coverage for behavioral health treatment and recovery. ARS staff members are experienced and skilled advocates who negotiate with insurance carriers on behalf of individual patients to achieve the highest level of coverage possible for appropriate care. Both the IAFF and ARS share a commitment that members should not be burdened with large or unexpected expenses after treatment. It is an IAFF priority to work toward ensuring that all members can afford treatment at the Center. This push to increased access will include providing members with the tools to expand behavioral health coverage.

Will anyone else know about my treatment?

Treatment is completely confidential. Treatment staff cannot discuss your treatment with ANYONE unless given explicit permission and cannot talk to your fire department or local – or even acknowledge whether someone's been referred or evaluated. All treatment staff and records are bound by HIPAA and/or Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records law, CFR Title 42: Part 2.

What makes the IAFF Center different from other treatment facilities?

In addition to providing the highest level of treatment for our members, the Center of Excellence will be established as a leader in clinical training, research and education on behavioral health and trauma treatment. The goal is to have this expertise and best practices spread throughout North America so all IAFF members can receive appropriate care.

When will the Center be open for business?

Target opening: January 2017