



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES RETURNING VETERANS INITIATIVE

Launches City-Wide Commitment to Helping Heroes Find Employment, Resources

Mayor Emanuel announced today that the City of Chicago will launch a "Returning Veterans Initiative" to ensure that veterans coming home to Chicago will have access to the services, benefits and support they deserve to successfully integrate back into civilian life.

"With the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the winding down of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, we are seeing many heroes return home to Chicago. It is essential that as a city we are prepared to welcome these men and women back and are prepared to help them find employment, resources and other assistance as they integrate back into civilian life," Mayor Emanuel said. "Our soldiers provide a service for which we all owe a debt of gratitude, and it is our collective moral obligation to make sure they have a smooth return home."

As part of the Returning Veterans Initiative, the City will undertake a variety of initiatives focused on two key areas: finding employment for returning veterans, and helping returning veterans find resources that are designed to assist their transition.

In the vein of finding employment, the City will open a new Veterans Employment Center that will help transition job-ready veterans into the workforce. This facility, hosted by the Northside Workforce Center and co-located alongside a Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Community Center at 4740 N. Sheridan Road, will include job placement services, career counseling, training resources, and other essential tools to help match veterans with jobs. Further, the City will work with employers to help them understand the



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unique challenges that Veterans face upon their return to the workforce, to ensure smooth transitions for both parties.

DFSS will also ensure that every Community Service Center is able to provide the services that Veterans deserve. This will guarantee that no matter where a Veteran lives, they will be able to go to the closest Community Service Center for support.

Finally, returning Veterans face a number of health issues related to their service. In response to the needs of disabled Veterans, the City will open a new Veterans Resource Office co-located at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities that will specialize in assisting Veterans with disabilities. By locating the office across the street from the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, clients will have immediate and convenient access to the services they need. The office will also launch and maintain a comprehensive online resource guide designed to help Veterans navigate the federal, state, county, city, and community based resources available in the region.

"As an alderman and a veteran, I proudly support the City's efforts to embrace the men and women of our armed forces as they return home," said Ald. James Balcer of Chicago's 11th Ward. "These programs will provide crucial support to our returning military as they face critical adjustments, and will benefit not just our veterans but our entire city."

To ensure that Veterans are aware of these important services, Mayor Emanuel will send postcards to all returning Chicago Veterans to thank them for their service. The postcard will contain information about the city's Returning Veterans Initiative, including addresses for the City's service centers as well as a link to the new online resource guide.

These programs will take effect in the near future, and are reflective of a City-wide effort to support veterans returning from overseas that includes the City's sister agencies.

This month, the Chicago Transit Authority has signed an executive order designating a veterans hiring preference for CTA employment (drivers, mechanics, engineers, managers, etc.) The National Able Network, a workforce development agency with a pipeline into returning veterans, will be CTA's partner in identifying and recruiting Veterans. This



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follows the lead of the City of Chicago, which already has in place a Veterans preference for hiring.

Further, on Thursday, the Chicago Housing Authority, in conjunction with the Volunteers of America Illinois, celebrated the grand opening of Hope Manor Apartments, a supportive housing development that will provide housing and intensive services to more than 80 veterans a year who are struggling with the transition to civilian life and are dealing with homelessness, unemployment, mental health challenges or addiction. Hope Manor is located on a parcel of land donated by the City of Chicago.

In the United States, one in three homeless men is a Veteran; one in four are suffering from major depression and/or PTSD; and unemployment rates for veterans are three times higher than the national unemployment rate. The City of Chicago is committed to helping our returning heroes.

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