MILITARY AND FAMILY HELPLINE

Serving Offutt AFB + Nebraska and Iowa
Powered by United Way of the Midlands

BACKGROUND

With about 60,000 veterans in the metro, over 100,000 in Nebraska and 172,000 in Iowa, the 211 contact center identified military-connected individuals (veterans, retirees, service members, civilian personnel, family members, etc.) as a target population. Additionally, the senior veteran homeless population within the next decade is expected to triple, emphasizing the urgency of our ongoing efforts to address essential needs of our military-connected community. In addition to our veteran population, nearly 70% of active duty servicemembers and families live off base within communities. With heightened focus on quality of life supports, United Way of the Midlands (UWM), Offutt AFB, and other military-serving organizations are working together to help families navigate robust support systems that extend beyond the military installation or Veteran Affairs offices.

EXPANDING OUR CONTACT CENTER WITH TAILORED VETERAN SUPPORTS

The Military and Family Helpline leverages the existing infrastructure of the 211 contact center to provide tailored support to veterans, retirees, service members, civilian personnel, and their families in Nebraska and Iowa.

For military-connected individuals and families, confidentiality, convenience and complexity are often cited as barriers to accessing programs or services. The 211 contact center serves as a vital lifeline, offering comprehensive and confidential assistance to individuals seeking access to a wide range of community resources and support services.

With more than 4,000 organizations currently in our database, 211 utilizes zip codes to efficiently pinpoint resources closest to users while also providing upfront eligibility and application information, streamlining the process and alleviating logistical challenges for those in need. Information is available 24/7/365 through calls, texts, web, and apps. Listings are reviewed annually, and the contact center is accredited nationally to ensure individuals receive excellent support. In the past fiscal year, we supported 313,000 contacts across these platforms -- with more than 60% seeking aid related to food, housing, or utilities.

The Military and Family Helpline will strengthen the military-specific services in our database and harness our existing infrastructure to better serve this community. Military-connected users will have access to trained call specialists for live support, as well as navigation services for more tailored services. As part of a signed partnership agreement with Offutt AFB, a navigator will maintain offices on base and at UWM to help families braid veteran, installation, and community-based resources to meet needs. This comprehensive approach ensures that individuals facing multifaceted challenges can access vital services with greater ease and efficiency, regardless of their proximity to military installations. Additionally, it serves as a potential model for other defense communities. By centralizing information and bolstering navigation services, the helpline fosters resilience and well-being by helping military-connected individuals navigate the intricacies of available resources designed to serve them.

The UWM team has more than 300 combined years of call center experience – including serving as co-chair of the national 211 steering committee and the board of the accreditation body, InformUSA. Additionally, we are proud to have a staff member who is a veteran and military spouse, participating in a national military spouse leadership initiative. She has successfully advocated for spouse reciprocity in South Dakota and has cultivated relationships with quality of life programs nationwide. These connections not only position us to bring visibility to Nebraska as a leader in supporting military families, but also pave the way for potentially scaling this model nationwide.

We are looking to incorporate the supportive services provided by Sarpy County Veterans Services into our database and request that your office complete our database form, which is reviewed annually for accuracy. By understanding the resources available through your office and other veteran service organizations, we can thoughtfully integrate additional community resources to support individual client needs. Including the basic eligibility criteria for each service will also enable us to offer more precise referrals to your organization and assist eligible veterans in gathering the necessary documentation.