

FAQs

IAFF Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF FIRE FIGHTERS



ADVANCED RECOVERY
SYSTEMS
an advanced approach to patient care

IAFF Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery
IAFFRecoveryCenter.com | 855.900.8437

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

The IAFF Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery — now open in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, just outside Washington, DC — offers specialized treatment exclusively to IAFF members who struggle with addiction and other mental health conditions.

What makes the IAFF Center of Excellence unique?

This residential treatment facility — available only to IAFF members — provides quality care from medical professionals who understand the fire service culture and the unique pressures of the job. Designed with fire fighters in mind, the 15-acre campus includes a state-of-the-art gym and other features that encourage physical activity so members can continue a fitness regimen as a way to help with their recovery and prepare them to return to the job they love.

Will anyone else know about your treatment?

Treatment is completely confidential. Treatment staff cannot discuss your treatment with anyone unless given explicit permission. They cannot talk to your fire department or local — or even acknowledge whether someone's been referred or evaluated. Strict confidentiality rules also apply to the IAFF, and the IAFF does not have access to any patient records.

What type of treatment is available?

The Center of Excellence offers multiple levels of evidence-based treatment to meet members' needs as they progress in their recovery, including detox, intensive in-patient and residential care, medical monitoring, 12-step meetings and aftercare.

Who is eligible to receive treatment?

The IAFF Center of Excellence is open to all IAFF members throughout North America, including active duty and retired members diagnosed with substance use disorder, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress.

How are members referred to the IAFF Center for Excellence?

IAFF members, local leaders, families and friends can call the 24/7 Call Center and Dedicated IAFF Line at 855-900-8437 to discuss possible referrals. Staff will determine treatment needs, discuss insurance coverage and, if appropriate, outline next steps for admission. If residential treatment is not needed, intake staff will suggest other treatment options within the ARS network of treatment centers or other community-based resources.

What is the length of stay?

The length of stay is driven by the treatment plan and insurance authorization. Typically, treatment is four to six weeks, but may be more or less depending on the individual member's needs.

What is daily life like at Center of Excellence?

The goal of a member's stay at the IAFF Center of Excellence is to successfully complete treatment and return to work. The activities and classes they participate in and relationships they build while at the IAFF Center of Excellence will give them the tools for a life in recovery.

Each person follows a daily schedule that promotes recovery, starting with gym sessions education classes, such as "Setting Yourself Up for Success" individual and group therapy, medical appointments, 12-step meetings and yoga or resilience training in the afternoon. There's also designated free time for reading, reflection, journaling, even a pick-up game of basketball — all essential parts of the recovery process.

How is treatment paid for?

Treatment is paid for by a member's health insurance. Center staff are working with multiple insurance companies to ensure that the IAFF Center is certified as an in-network provider. In some jurisdictions, current insurance plans already provide comprehensive coverage for behavioral health treatment and recovery. Center 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. A member's out-of-pocket expenses will depend on insurance coverage, co-pay amount, deductible and cost to travel to the Center. For more information, call the 24/7 IAFF Dedicated Line — (855) 900-8437.

What can IAFF affiliates do to promote the IAFF Center of Excellence to their members?

Affiliate leaders are already taking proactive steps to ensure members receive treatment if needed. In addition, affiliates are encouraged to educate Human Resources, EAPs, department medical personnel and community counselors about the Center of Excellence and its unique capacity to successfully treat IAFF members. Visit www.iaffrecoverycenter.com for brochures and other materials to share with members and other stakeholders.

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What is the IAFF's role in running the IAFF Center of Excellence?

The IAFF does not own or have any financial interest in the Center of Excellence. The General President and his appointed Advisory Committee provide guidance to Center staff and make certain that the program, treatment and services are meeting the unique needs of members.

Do fire fighters work at the IAFF Center of Excellence?

Because our members feel most comfortable talking to other fire fighters, current and retired fire fighters and other fire personnel are on staff. All are legally bound by strict confidentiality rules. The Center is also committed to provide education and training to Peer Support Trainers and, when authorized, involve them in aftercare plans.

What happens when the member returns home after treatment?

Follow-up to treatment is critical for long-term success. IAFF Center of Excellence staff work with members and their families to ensure a successful return to home and work, regardless of where they live. Staff help set-up a structured support network, develop accountability plans and provide links to available peer programs so that members continue with their recovery at home. Federal confidentiality rules still apply during this transition process, so members must provide explicit permission for Center staff to talk to any family or department personnel.

What type of structured support is needed?

The Center of Excellence recommends members take part in the following supports once they return home: outpatient treatment, alcohol/drug screenings to help with self-accountability, recovery mentors and self-help support groups. Members are strongly encouraged to follow the discharge protocol, even when they are not required to do so, to maximize their chances for long-term success.

The Center recommends that these supports remain in place for at least 18 months. Research shows that intensive treatment is most successful when followed by longer-term treatment and support. Those who use supports for at least 18 months are more likely to maintain long-term recovery and have positive outcomes (such as job stability). If the member grants permission, Center staff will reach out to the member once a month for one year to provide ongoing support.

What happens if members seek treatment because it's mandated by the job?

For mandatory referrals from a department, members must sign a release upon admission and identify any employer forms that require signature. IAFF Center of Excellence staff will strive to ensure that treatment and discharge plans line up with departmental requirements. If authorized, Center staff will advise the department when a member has successfully completed treatment and refer the member to department or community resources for fit for duty evaluation.

What can locals do to assist members once they return home?

Aftercare support is critically important for the long-term recovery of members. Thus, affiliates can help educate the department about the need for a flexible work schedule that allows a member to return to work and also participate in outpatient counseling. Initially, the member may need an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), which requires several hours of counseling each weekday. Some understanding and short-term flexibility during this transition period can make all the difference. Locals also demonstrate their support and concern by respecting the member's privacy and avoiding talking to others about the member, even if their interest is well-intentioned.

Addiction is a chronic disease and the relapse rate is very high for those in the general population. The good news is that IAFF members have a much greater chance at long-term recovery if they obtain high-quality treatment and follow the aftercare recommendations. In addition, fire fighters and paramedics are highly motivated because they want to return to the job they love.

However, recovery is a continuing journey that may involve setbacks. When/if relapse occurs, friends and family may feel betrayed or angry. If this occurs, it's most helpful to think of a setback as similar to a recurrence of any other disease. Just as we have empathy for people when their cancer returns, members who are recovering from addiction need compassion and concern. Members prepare for this possibility in advance by developing a relapse plan that identifies steps for getting back on track.

Will additional Centers of Excellence open?

The plan is to advance best-practice treatment through research and training to benefit IAFF members across North America. Once the initial IAFF Center of Excellence is fully established, the IAFF will assess the need and explore opportunities for expansion.

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