



N. Illinois Service Officer and Benefits Advisor Newsletter:

December 2025

This Newsletter is published monthly as a Service and Reference for all Veterans, Veteran Family Members, and friends of Veterans. Each month **multiple** Veteran Military Organization sites (and other sources, as applicable) are queried for timely, relevant, and viable Veteran issues... issues that regardless of source, impact all Veterans.

Nothing is provided in this newsletter that cannot be retrieved by the reader – all sources are cited.
Articles and/or article excerpts below are simply provided for ease of access and/or reference.

Regrettably, we are heading into a high-risk season for Veteran mental health issues to include depression and suicide. Therefore, this month's newsletter covers Buddy Checks. The article excerpts below are taken off American Legion sites – links included in the text can lead to additional information.

A phone call to a comrade can save a life... check on your buddy.

As I always do, I Highly Recommend using a Certified/Professional Veteran Service Officer to assist you with any questions you have regarding benefits earned by your Service.

Point of Contact information on recommended area Certified/Professional Service Officer Assistance:

- Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Phone (IDVA) Phone: (217) 836-6575; Email: Michael.Jay@Illinois.gov
- Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County (VACWC), Phone: (815) 516-2850, Email vac@wincoil.us

Note: Links are included in the below selected text which can provide more information.

#David

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The American Legion Buddy Check Program

Source: <https://www.legion.org/buddycheck/about>

In the first four years after The American Legion launched Buddy Checks as an official program, our members have reached more than **1 million veterans** and provided critical assistance.

The number of local American Legion posts conducting Buddy Check operations in those first four years **has grown from 3,683 to 4,456**.

Buddy Checks are not membership or fundraising calls; they are simple check-ins with veterans in the community to **see how they are doing and to learn how the local post can help**.

The **MyLegion.org** web platform contains contact information of American Legion members and former members.

The Department of Veterans Affairs launched its own **National Buddy Check Week** in 2023 and invites involvement from local American Legion posts.

American Legion posts are also strongly encouraged, by resolution, to make Buddy Check calls during **Veterans Week (mid-November)** and **American Legion Birthday Week (mid-March)**.

Many American Legion posts have assembled **Buddy Check teams** that make calls monthly or even more frequently.

Buddy Check teams are urged to have at their fingertips a list of local resources available if needed. These may be **American Legion service officers, Vet Centers, VA healthcare facilities**, or others who can help.

Veterans may be reminded of the **Veterans Crisis Line** in case they know of someone who needs urgent assistance, or if they need it themselves.

Read about how Buddy Checks work at the local level on **LEGIONTOWN.ORG/BUDDY-CHECKS** or **SHARE YOUR OWN BUDDY CHECK STORY**

Tools For Buddy Check Teams

The American Legion's Buddy Check program

Source: <https://www.legion.org/buddycheck/tools>



Explanation of the program, steps to conduct a successful Buddy Check program, sample scripts and more are available for use by members and posts.

[The American Legion's Buddy Check program \(PDF\)](#)

How to get organized and use myLegion.org

The national membership database housed on myLegion.org provides contact information, indexed by Zip Code, that can be used to conduct Buddy Checks. Steps about how to organize team and use myLegion.org to find and contact veterans can be found here:

[How to organize a buddy check](#)

Lessons Learned

Watch a video about what a Maryland Legionnaire learned about Buddy Checks in the program's first year.

[Buddy Check Video](#)

Sample media advisory for posts

Posts are encouraged to invite local media to see how Buddy Checks are working in their communities. This downloadable template can be customized by a local post and distributed to media outlets with an invitation to cover.

[Fillable Media Alert \(PDF\)](#)

Sample Buddy Check press release for posts

The community wants to know when and why The American Legion conducts Buddy Checks for veterans in their communities. A sample press release is available that can be customized to include specifics about a local Buddy Check event or series of events.

[Fillable Press Release \(PDF\)](#)

Buddy Check door hangers

Convenient, downloadable Buddy Check door hangers are available. Posts can fill out the information on the digital file before printing, or print and then write in the information if no one is home when the Buddy Check call is made.

[Print-ready Door Hanger \(PDF\)](#)

FAQs About The American Legion

A succinct statement of basic answers to frequently asked questions about The American Legion also provides space for Buddy Check teams to modify with department and local programs and services.

[Download FAQs Worksheet \(PDF\)](#)

ADDITIONAL OUTSIDE RESOURCES

- [VA Mental Health Resources](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(AFSP\)](#)
- [Anxiety and Depression Association of America \(ADAA\)](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)
- [Mental Health America \(MHA\)](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

Buddy Checks

- [ABOUT BUDDY CHECKS](#)
- [TOOLS FOR BUDDY CHECK TEAMS](#)
- [BUDDY CHECK STORIES](#)
- [RESOURCES](#)
- [NEED HELP?](#)

Need Help?

Source: <https://www.legion.org/buddycheck/help>

If you are in immediate need of assistance, the Veterans Crisis Line provide 24/7 confidential crisis support for all veterans and their loved ones.



For additional support, find an American Legion service officer who can help
<https://www.legion.org/serviceofficers>