



**FY21**  
**ILLINOIS ARMY**  
**CHILD AND YOUTH**  
**PROGRAM**

*Annual Report*

*Getting CREATIVE*  
*in the New Normal*

"The Program has given him the opportunity to connect with others who can empathize and relate, learn needed social skills, and learn new ways of looking at activities. I'm so appreciative of the Program and the team because of their dedication to the entire state and specifically our family; it's been one of the true motivators that allows me and my family to continue a career in the Illinois National Guard."

SSG Jordan Eldridge, Parent.



## Mission

Promote and sustain the quality of life and resilience of military children and youth by providing secure, timely, flexible, high-quality support services and enrichment programs.

## National Goals

- 1. EDUCATION:** Provide life-skill education to the child and youth of the National Guard, their caregivers and community supporters.
- 2. ACCESS:** Provide equal access to Federal and State benefits that support children and families, counseling, education, child care and other resources needed to foster a healthy, stable and secure environment.
- 3. OPPORTUNITY:** To create opportunities for participation in programs, events and activities available across the spectrum of government, community and the private vector, geared towards the behavioral health, physical health and welfare of children and youth.
- 4. COMMUNICATION:** To build a sense of belonging to the National Guard community by creating secure opportunities to network with other youth, parents/guardians and youth program facilitators in one's community, state and across the nation.
- 5. RESILIENCE:** To infuse resilience standards into all National Guard children and youth programs.
- 6. OUTREACH:** To build and sustain contact with parents/guardians and children of the National Guard in order to create awareness of available support services and programs, while being mindful of age, location, military and civilian mindsets.



## Best Practice: Virtual Camps

For FY21, virtual programming has been our most successful program since the start of COVID-19. We were able to keep youth connected, engaged and learning through "STREAM" activities (science, technology, resiliency, engineering, art and math). These kits were delivered right to their home to complete. We also held a monthly Google Meet to go over their activities. We reached 415 ILARNG military kids!

## Teen Resiliency

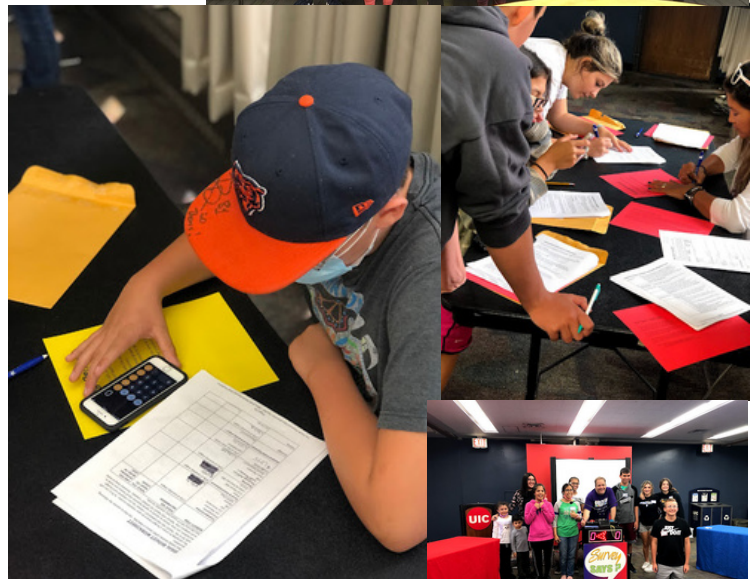
Illinois' first in-person workshop after COVID-19 was the Annual Teen Resiliency Workshop in March of 2021. It was the very last event we held in 2020 and the very first event we were able to conduct again in 2021. Illinois was also able to provide the full curriculum and individual classes at future teen meetings and events.

- 23 Teens
- 1 Resiliency Workshop - Full Curriculum
- 2 YAC meetings - HTGS and PIIP

## Youth Advisory Council

- 4 meetings
- 1 Youth and Teen Leadership Forum
- 1 Illinois Military Tween/Teen Summit

This year we focused on bouncing back, leadership, finances, community service and connection. A highlight from our year was having the opportunity for our Youth Advisory Council members to work with Shedd Aquarium to clean up 154LBS of trash on a local beach!!!



## Yellow Ribbon

Since the start of COVID-19, Yellow Ribbon Programming has been virtual. Going virtual means getting creative! Illinois conducted five Yellow Ribbon events reaching 43 youth ages 6-16 years old in FY21. Activity Packs were created and tailored to the development cycle the family was currently in. Each pack comes with different hands on activities, a parent doll, and a folder filled with deployment relevant information. While, Illinois was not able to conduct in-person programming, we were still able to reach the children of the deployed service members through creative means.

"Our boys (7&9) LOVE attending the ILNG Child & Youth Program Events every chance they get. This past year has been hard due to the COVID restrictions/cancellations. Our boys are constantly asking when is the next Child & Youth event, especially the overnight events. The ILNG Child & Youth Team is amazing!! They are some of the most patient, caring and understanding individuals I have ever met."

- MAJ Kira Tierney, Parent

## Volunteers

FY21 had 15 adult and youth volunteers serve 272 hours at two day camps, two adventure camps, three teen workshops, a Back to School Distribution and Camp in a Bag. Illinois also further developed a volunteer training program and was able to secure volunteers at all in-person camps. Volunteers are the TRUE foundation for a successful event.



## Community Partner Highlights



Operation Homefront and Back to School Illinois partner with the Illinois National Guard Youth Program year after year to provide Back to School Kits. This is a great opportunity for families to receive Education Materials, resources and support. 1,920 military youth from ILARNG & IANG received kits.

## 14 Community Partners



USO Illinois continues to provide ILARNG families support and services by creating opportunities for families to be involved with other military families. Whether it is a virtual learning workshop or in-person trivia at a teen event, USO Illinois was there to provide ILARNG youth and teens with support.

# Numbers in Review

## Army National Guard

Adults: 1092  
6-12: 1227  
13-18: 791  
0-5: 392

## Air National Guard

Adults: 265  
6-12: 167  
13-18: 167

## Total Served (All)

Adults: 1502  
6-12: 1394  
13-18: 966  
0-5: 392

## Other

Adults: 144  
13-18: 8

## Program Highlights

37 events, 351 Program Hours

- 22 Day Camps (19 virtual and 3 in-person), 476 participants
- 18 Family & Youth Program meetings
- 5 YRRP Events, 43 participants
- 6 Youth Advisory Council/Teen Council meetings, 45 participants
- 3 Month of the Military Child events, 100 participants
- 2 Overnight Residential Camps, 23 participants
- 2 Education Outreach Briefs, 38 participants
- 1 Youth & Teen Volunteer Training, 5 participants
- 11th Annual Back to School Event, 3026 participants
- 4th Annual Tween/Teen Resiliency Workshop, 14 participants
- 1 Region V Teen Summit, 13 participants
- 1 Illinois State Tween/Teen Summit, 12 participants
- 1 Youth & Teen Leadership Forum, 20 participants

# Best Practice: Day Camps

Over the past few years, Illinois has been able to grow the participation in its Day Camps. Even after a year and a half of COVID-19, parents and kids were excited to participate. In FY21 we held 3 in-person Day Camps serving 61 youth. Each camp had a specific focus and theme. Nationwide, our youth have had to endure a lot of different emotions trying to work through COVID-19, deployments, schools, sports, family life and much more. At least for Illinois, our in-person Day Camps provided the ILARNG Youth the chance to have a sense of normalcy and rebuild those skills by participating in our StReam concepts, physical fitness, team building, connection, communication and resiliency skills.



## Illinois Child and Youth Program Coordinators



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*Illinois National Guard Youth Program*