



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF FIRE FIGHTERS

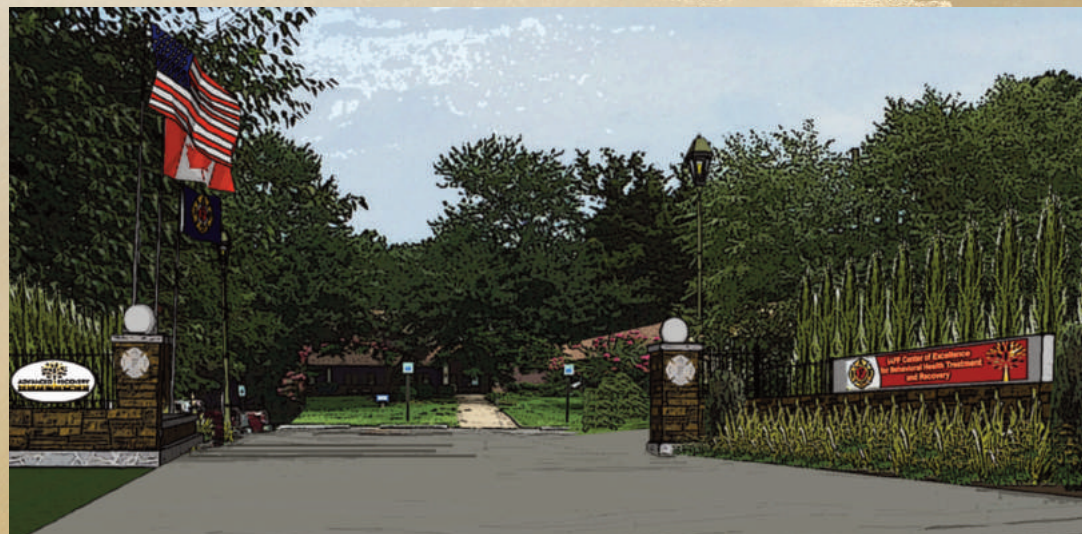


ADVANCED RECOVERY
SYSTEMS
an advanced approach to patient care

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The IAFF Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery

Treatment exclusively for IAFF members • Completely Confidential
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www.IAFFRecoveryCenter.com

Our Mission: To offer treatment for successful recovery and help IAFF members return to the job.

Fire Fighter

FALL 2016
QUARTERLY

Providing a Path to Recovery

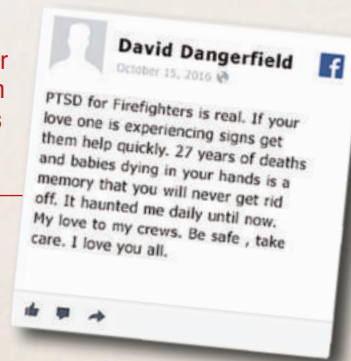


**IAFF Center of Excellence for
Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery
OPENING MARCH 2017**



Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery

This Facebook post was written by Indian River County, FL Local 2201 member and Battalion Chief David Dangerfield just hours before his death by suicide on October 15, 2016.



David Dangerfield had been fighting post-traumatic stress disorder for years. He committed suicide on October 15, 2016. Like all IAFF members, he had responded to any number of traumatic events, many of them tragic. All of this trauma has a cumulative effect, often developing into post-traumatic stress. It's a serious and chronic condition that can ruin the careers of fire fighters and paramedics, destroy families and jeopardize public and fire fighter safety. While it's always existed, post-traumatic stress is just now becoming more widely recognized as a major issue affecting all ranks in the fire service. "An alarming number of members are struggling with behavioral and stress-related conditions, but there are very few programs for

treating it," says General President Harold Schaitberger. "We have an obligation to make sure we provide our members every path possible to recover from post-traumatic stress and the damage it can do to their lives and their families." Behavioral health has always been an important component of the IAFF/IAFC Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI). As more has been learned about post-traumatic stress and its impact on members, the IAFF has begun an intensive effort to bring it out of the shadows to help members start the process towards recovery.

"Last year, after we published a cover story in *Fire Fighter Quarterly* [Winter 2015] on the subject, we were inundated with calls from members looking for help," says Assistant to the General President for Health and Safety Patrick Morrison.

Since then, the International has launched an initiative to develop a behavioral health peer-to-peer training program. This summer, the IAFF brought members to the Kitchen Table to tell their stories of recognizing they had a problem and forging their



Post-traumatic stress affects fire fighters and paramedics at double the rate of the general population.

path to recovery [go to www.youtube.com/iafftv to watch this episode of Kitchen Table].

"Once I started my recovery program, I realized I wasn't the only one who thought like this, that there are other people out there that had the same problems, and that you need to really talk to somebody and ask for help," said Mike James, a member of Burlington, ON Local 1552 who participated in the Kitchen Table discussion. Before joining the fire service, James served in the Canadian Armed Services as a Clearance Diver. When he lost his close friend and roommate in a diving training incident, he began to struggle with post-traumatic stress and alcoholism, as he suffered from immense survivor's guilt.

Members struggling with post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and substance abuse need treatment from professionals who understand the culture and unique pressures of the job.

However, there is no existing treatment facility that meets this need. The IAFF is filling that critical void with the new IAFF Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery **exclusively for IAFF members.**

Advanced Recovery Systems (ARS) — a leader in behavioral healthcare management — is building and opening this facility, located in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, just outside Washington, DC, to offer treatment for successful recovery from post-traumatic stress and co-occurring addictions and help IAFF members return to the job as quickly as possible.

"The IAFF Center of Excellence will be there for our members — and our members only — to receive the help they need in taking the first steps toward recovery," says Schaitberger. "They will be able to go there and receive the treatment and support they need to heal from trained professionals who understand their profession and their experiences. It will be a safe haven for members to talk with other fire fighters who have faced or overcome similar challenges."

ARS has unsurpassed expertise in behavioral health and recovery and is ready to address the specific post-traumatic stress and resulting additional addiction issues that can be caused by the kind of situations IAFF members experience.

"I think going to a place that is run by the IAFF, or a company associated with them, would be really, really good because it's fire fighters for fire fighters," said Mike Higgins, a retired member of

Boston, MA Local 718 who also took part in Kitchen Table.

Designed from the ground up, the Center will provide comprehensive and best-practice treatment from clinicians who understand the types of trauma experienced by IAFF members. The 15-acre campus includes a state-of-the-art gym and other features that encourage physical activity to help in recovery and preparing to return to the job.

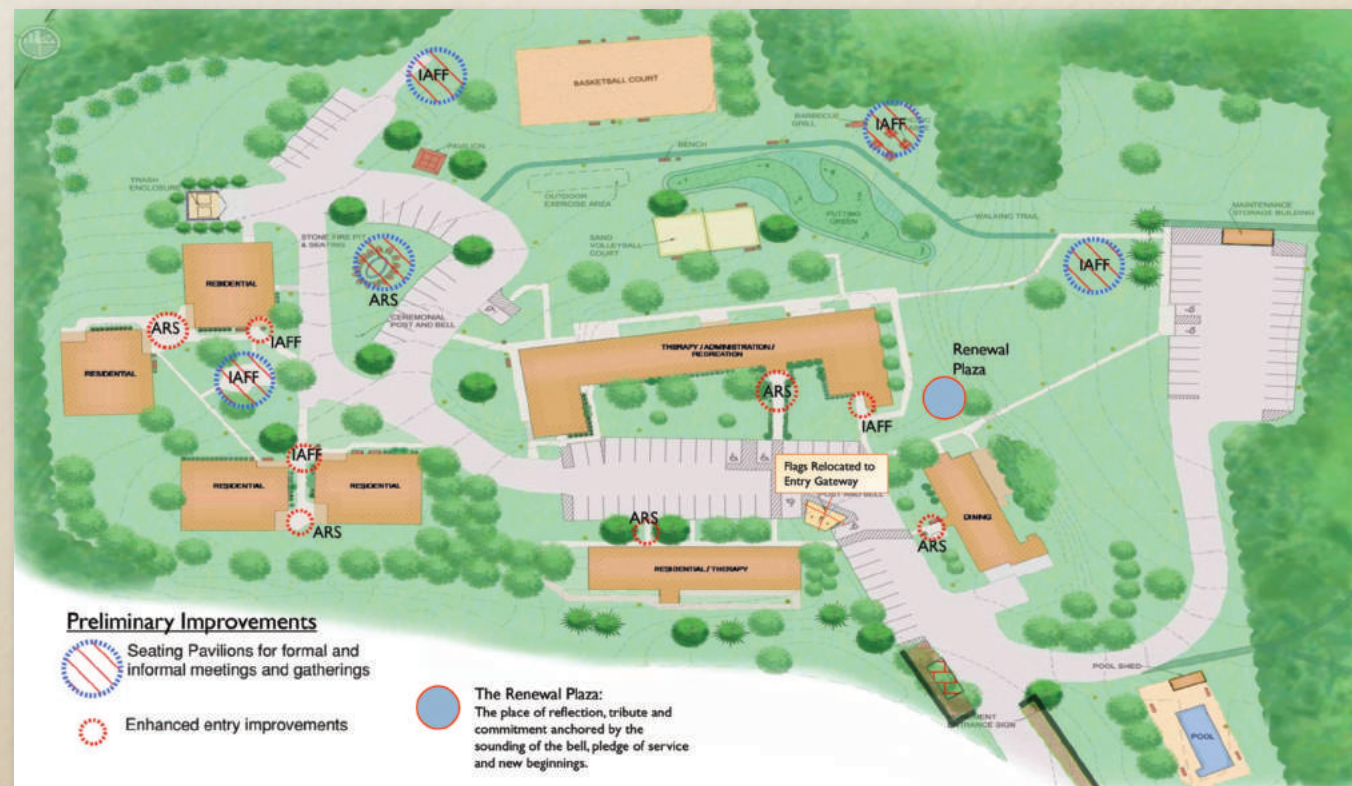
The Center will use evidence-based approaches for treating post-traumatic stress, including cognitive behavior therapy and exposure therapy, as well as other activities to assist with recovery. Treatment is completely confidential — **Center staff cannot discuss your treatment with anyone — not your fire department, not your local** — unless given explicit permission.

On average, treatment is four to six weeks, with continuing aftercare services. This follow-up treatment is critical to long-term success, and Center staff will work with members and their families to ensure a successful return home and to work, including support network, accountability plans and other resources for continuing recovery.

In addition to providing the highest level of treatment for IAFF members, the Center will serve to train and educate peer support members on the unique challenges presented in the treatment of post-traumatic stress and substance abuse in the fire fighter population, with the ultimate goal of developing needed protocols for fire departments to handle these complex mental health issues.

"Nothing matters more than our members' health, and this is a critically important action that puts their health and well-being first," says Schaitberger.

The Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery is **expected to open in March 2017** in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. For more information, visit IAFFRecoveryCenter.com or call (855) 900-8437. ■



- The Center will offer multiple levels of treatment, including:**
- Detox
 - Residential care, including medical monitoring
 - Outpatient care and services
 - Intensive in-patient care
 - 12-step meetings

24/7 Centralized Call Center | (855) 900-8437

The IAFF and ARS are committed to delivering treatment that produces positive outcomes for members, and are reaching out to the major insurance carriers to explain the Center's cost-effective approach and promote coverage for this level of care. The IAFF is making it a priority to ensure members are not burdened with large or unexpected expenses after treatment.