



## Australian Government

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### Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

## Factsheet VCS01 - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS)

Call VVCS on 1800 011 046\* available 24/7

### Purpose

This Factsheet provides information about services available to veterans, eligible ADF members and their families through the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS).

### What services does VVCS provide?

VVCS provides free and confidential, nationwide counselling and support for war and service-related mental health conditions, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance and anger. Support is also available for relationship and family matters that can arise due to the unique nature of the military lifestyle.

VVCS counsellors have an understanding of military culture and can work with clients to find effective solutions for improved mental health and wellbeing.

VVCS provides the following services:

- individual, couple and family counselling and support for those with more complex needs
- services to enhance family functioning and parenting
- after-hours crisis telephone counselling through Veterans Line
- group programs to develop skills and enhance support
- information, education and self-help resources
- referrals to other services or specialist treatment programs.

### Am I eligible for VVCS?

The following members of the veteran and defence community presenting with mental health and wellbeing concerns, can seek help from the VVCS:

- veterans, whether current or former serving with the Australian Defence Force;
- other current and former Australian Defence Force members who have:
  - served in domestic or international disaster relief operations
  - served in border protection operations
  - served in the Royal Australian Navy as a submariner
  - been medically discharged; or
  - been involved in a training accident that resulted in serious injury to any person.

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- participants in the Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme
- certain United Nations and Australian police approved peacekeepers
- the partners and dependent children (up to age 26) of those members listed above
- the ex-partners of Vietnam veterans within five years of separation.
- sons and daughters (of any age) of Vietnam veterans
- War Widow[er]s
- all Conditions (Gold) or DVA Health Card Totally & Permanently Incapacitated (Gold)
- DVA Health Card – Specific Conditions (White) for specified mental health conditions
- the partners, dependent children and parents of members killed in service-related incidents
- participants in the Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel scheme; and
- current serving members who are referred to VVCS by the Australian Defence Force under an Agreement for Services.

To confirm your eligibility please call VVCS on 1800 011 046\* or visit [www.vvcs.gov.au](http://www.vvcs.gov.au)

Note: Eligibility provides access to services only within the limits of VVCS core business. Where a person's clinical needs are outside VVCS core business or the clinical skill base in any location it may be necessary to refer to other specialist mental health services such as: specialist trauma recovery programmes, hospital psychiatric services, Drug and Alcohol services, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) etc.

## **How do I access VVCS?**

To access VVCS services, contact VVCS on 1800 011 046\* between 9am and 5pm on weekdays.

Current serving ADF members may request a referral for VVCS services from their ADF health provider or self-refer if they meet VVCS eligibility criteria.

Medical practitioners or allied mental health professionals may refer a prospective client or recommend self-referral to VVCS.

Welfare and ex-service organisations are encouraged to support client self-referral should they consider that it would benefit a member of the veteran and ex-service community.

## **How does VVCS protect my confidentiality and privacy?**

VVCS is committed to preserving and upholding your rights to confidentiality and privacy.

VVCS records are stored securely and every effort is made to ensure that your counselling sessions and contact with VVCS are confidential. VVCS keeps confidential notes and reports on your counselling and group program attendance so we can provide you with appropriate professional help and for planning and evaluation purposes.

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Your clinical information will not be released to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, other government agencies or external parties without your consent, unless there are exceptional circumstances where information may have to be released in accordance with the law. This would only occur where your safety or the safety of others is at serious risk, in serious criminal matters, or in response to a court direction.

If you are a member of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and you have been referred through the ADF Agreement for Services, VVCS is required to provide periodic reports regarding your treatment to the ADF Referring Authority.

VVCS are bound by the Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). For more information on how VVCS manages personal information, please visit <http://www.vvcs.gov.au/documents/vvcs-privacy-policy.rtf> or email [vvcs@dva.gov.au](mailto:vvcs@dva.gov.au) and request a copy of the VVCS Privacy Policy.

## What are my rights and responsibilities when using VVCS?

As a client of VVCS you can expect to:

- be treated with respect, dignity and courtesy regardless of age, disability, cultural and linguistic background, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and religious or spiritual beliefs
- have your right to privacy and confidentiality protected, within the limits imposed by the law and duty of care
- have fair and equal access to VVCS services, including the use of an interpreter if required
- have access to information about your counselling and treatment options and be involved in decision-making regarding these options
- be able to refuse any, or all, assessment and care that is offered
- access your records by request, in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 1982; and
- receive services that comply with appropriate standards of professionalism, competency and accountability.

As a VVCS client, you are responsible for:

- respecting the right of other clients and staff to privacy and confidentiality
- treating other VVCS clients and staff in a respectful manner
- ensuring that you are not under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and/or not behaving in a way which makes delivery of service difficult or dangerous
- attending appointments and advising the relevant VVCS centre as soon as possible if you are unable to attend
- respecting centre property; and
- honouring agreements made with VVCS about service provision and care.

## How can I give feedback or make a complaint to VVCS?

VVCS welcomes and values your feedback as it helps to improve our service. You can email your feedback to the [VVCS Feedback inbox](mailto:vvcsfeedback@dva.gov.au) at [vvcsfeedback@dva.gov.au](mailto:vvcsfeedback@dva.gov.au)

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To make a complaint, contact your local VVCS centre on 1800 011 046\* during business hours and ask to speak to the centre Director.

If you feel your complaint has not been addressed, please phone the VVCS National Manager or Assistant National Manager on (02) 6289 6471, or email your complaint to the [VVCS Feedback inbox](mailto:vvcsfeedback@dva.gov.au) at [vvcsfeedback@dva.gov.au](mailto:vvcsfeedback@dva.gov.au)

If you are still not satisfied with the response to your complaint, you can write to:  
The Repatriation Commissioner, GPO Box 9998, Canberra ACT 2601

## What other help is available?

For access to mental health videos, self-help tools, mobile apps, and advice on how to seek professional help, visit DVA's [At Ease website](http://www.at-ease.dva.gov.au) at [www.at-ease.dva.gov.au](http://www.at-ease.dva.gov.au)

Your GP can provide treatment or refer you to a psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker if needed.

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this Factsheet is general in nature and does not take into account individual circumstances. You should not make important decisions, such as those that affect your financial or lifestyle position on the basis of information contained in this Factsheet. Where you are required to lodge a written claim for a benefit, you must take full responsibility for your decisions prior to the written claim being determined. You should seek confirmation in writing of any oral advice you receive from DVA.

## Related Factsheets

- [HSV99 Mental Health Support](#)
- [VCS02 Effects of Mental Health Concerns on Veterans and their Families](#)
- [VCS03 The Effects of PTSD](#)
- [VCS05 Transition to Civilian Life](#)

## More Information

### Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS)

Phone: 1800 011 046 \*

[Email](mailto:vvcs@dva.gov.au): [vvcs@dva.gov.au](mailto:vvcs@dva.gov.au)

[VVCS Website](http://www.vvcs.gov.au): [www.vvcs.gov.au](http://www.vvcs.gov.au)

[At Ease Website](http://www.at-ease.dva.gov.au): [www.at-ease.dva.gov.au](http://www.at-ease.dva.gov.au)

### DVA General Enquiries

Metro Phone: 133 254 \*

Regional Phone: 1800 555 254 \*

[Email](mailto:GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au): [GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au](mailto:GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au)

[DVA Website](http://www.dva.gov.au): [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

[Factsheet Website](http://factsheets.dva.gov.au): [factsheets.dva.gov.au](http://factsheets.dva.gov.au)

\* Calls from pay phones and some mobile phones may incur additional charges.