

## Health & Fitness Tips

### Mental Health: Sources of Help

By Brian Hartigan - Service Newspapers - August 2007

A number of organisations within Defence are responsible for delivering mental health services. These have been integrated over recent years under the Defence Mental Health Strategy.

While the Directorate of Mental Health coordinates the integration of mental health services at a policy and strategic level, [Regional Mental Health Teams \(RMHTs\)](#) have been established at a local level to implement mental health policy and facilitate the delivery of products and training.

RMHTs are multi-disciplinary bodies comprising representatives from the full range of ADF mental health services – usually the local chaplain, social worker, psychologist, medical officer and psychiatrist. Other mental health professionals may be invited to participate as regional need dictates.

The role of the RMHTs is to facilitate the development of mental health support at a regional level across the ADF. Broadly, they function to:

- endorse and promote the strategic and policy framework for the management of mental health in the ADF;
- ensure the viability of and enhance mental health initiatives; and
- assist regional commands to ensure compliance with all legislative and policy obligations relevant to managing mental health.

The first duty of the RMHT is to the regional command to which it owes a duty of care, with primary concern for the mental health interests of ADF members within that regional command structure.

#### Key alliance

The [Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service \(VVCS\)](#) has delivered support to service personnel for many years. Provision of this service was ratified through a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) signed on behalf of Defence and the [Department of Veterans' Affairs](#) in June 2004.

The alliance gives ADF members and their families greater exposure to crisis intervention, counselling, case management and rehabilitation services, and plugs a potential gap in continuity of care for ADF members.

#### Eligibility

Access to VVCS is available to all ADF members and dependants, regardless of veteran status.

Members considered veterans of any conflict are entitled to VVCS services without referral and at no cost.

ADF members and/or their family must be referred in writing and must have been assessed as requiring treatment of the nature in which VVCS specialises. Service members must be referred by an ADF medical officer or psychologist. Family members can be referred the same way or by a Defence Community Organisation social worker.

Full-time members and reservists on CFTS are eligible to access VVCS within the guidelines of DI(G) Pers 16.1.

#### Veterans Line

Eligible ADF members and their families can call the crisis telephone counselling service, known as **Veterans Line**, at any time on **1800 011 046**.

