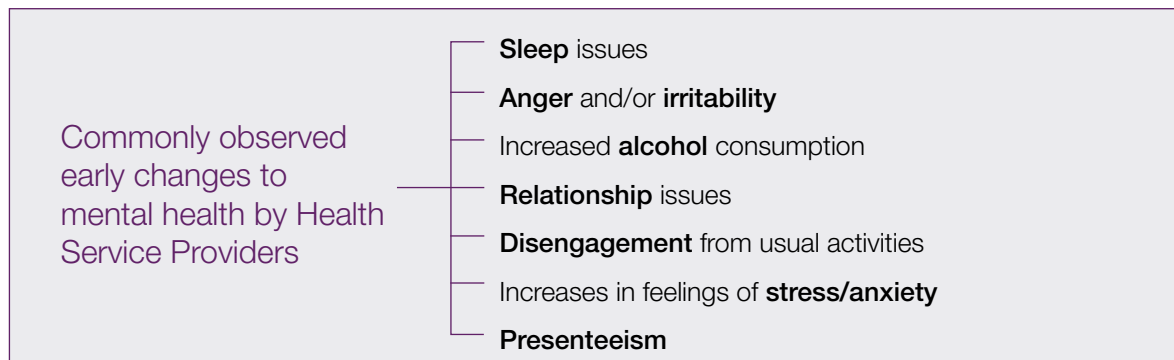


Wellness Action Through Checking Health (WATCH)

Health Service Providers

Changes in the mental health and wellbeing of ADF members can appear at any time throughout their career and might look different for each person. Early identification and intervention leads to better mental health and improved capability and functioning of the workforce. The Wellness Action Through Checking Health (WATCH) research project asked Health Service Providers (HSPs) about early changes to ADF members' mental health.

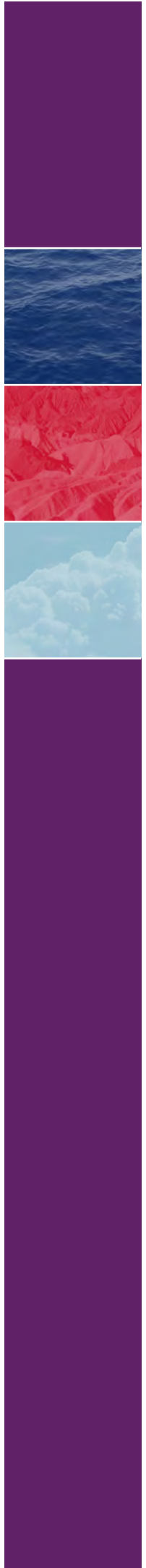


When observing moderate mental health symptoms, what did HSPs do?

<p>Provided psychoeducation (e.g - sleep hygiene, healthy eating, benefits of exercise, emotional processing, balancing workload, and coping strategies)</p>	<p>Provided a referral to: GPs/MOs; other specialists (e.g - sleep specialists); mental health practitioners; or Open Arms</p>
<p>Recommended phone apps that they were aware of (e.g - mindfulness or meditation apps)</p>	<p>Encouraged self-help strategies (e.g - writing down stressors)</p>
<p>Encouraged reaching out to social supports</p>	

Why did HSPs think that ADF members may not present to healthcare providers for support with moderate mental health symptoms?

- Military Employment Classification change fears
- Lack of education for moderate mental health symptoms
- Stress/worry about being perceived as weak
- Defence culture/stoicism
- Financial concerns
- Concerns about letting the team down.



How can Health Service Providers support early identification?

Ask about changes in behaviour and wellbeing

- The biggest indicator of early mental health challenges is when ADF members feel different from their usual selves. This could be in relation to their mood or behaviour, relationships, interactions with others, absence or presence, or their physical appearance.
- Health service providers can routinely check in on changes by explicitly asking. Often members themselves may not be aware of the importance of early symptoms and may not yet consider them 'problems' to raise.

Familiarise yourself with key early changes

- Early changes in ADF members may include difficulties with sleep, increased alcohol consumption, relationship issues, withdrawal, changes in diet, fatigue, irritability, anger and difficulties with everyday tasks.
- Becoming familiar with these early warning signs may help you ask about and pick up on subtle indicators more quickly.

Provide support and give ADF members a next step

- Provide emotional support such as actively listening by trying to understand how they are feeling.
- Talk with ADF members about the importance of social support networks.
- Encourage ADF members to talk to their health professionals about how they are doing physically and emotionally.
- Offer tips around how to actively and appropriately self-manage common early changes in mental health.
- Help ADF members to recognise when to move from self-management to a health professional.

Resources



Defence Health
and wellbeing
fact sheets



Open Arms military
awareness training



Open Arms Provider
resources



Family Engagement
in Health Care
Course

Key take-aways

- **Early identification of mental health changes** is a key factor in preventing the escalation of symptoms.
- **Warning signs of changes in mental health** can include sleep difficulties and fatigue, relationship issues, withdrawal, increased alcohol consumption, changes in diet, anger, irritability and difficulties with everyday tasks.
- **Sometimes ADF members won't talk about symptoms they're experiencing** unless prompted. Be proactive in asking about recent changes in mental health and wellbeing.



To read the full WATCH Project Report [click here](#) or scan the QR code. Contact the research team for more information at health.research@defence.gov.au.

