

Understanding Military Context Toolkit

Understanding and overcoming barriers

For many ADF members, admitting they have concerns about their mental health can be a difficult step to take. Some feel ashamed, some feel they may have failed in some way, and others may feel they haven't lived up to the expectation of being totally self-reliant. Others may have concerns about their careers if they admit to having a problem.

Some individuals may not believe in the effectiveness of mental health treatment, prefer to keep their feelings private or have had bad experiences when seeking help in the past.



Access to support and privacy

Some, especially those living on base, don't like to seek help because there is no clear separation between their professional and private life. They worry that friends and colleagues will find out about their problems.

Many ADF members are posted in remote locations where getting help is more difficult.

Things you and your loved one can do

- Listen to what your loved one is worried about and acknowledge that it can be hard to ask for help.
- Encourage your loved one to talk to peers who have sought help.
- Find out about how services deal with confidentiality. All services are required to provide you with information about how they keep your information private and any limits to confidentiality.
- Find a service that works for your loved one:
 - Some people like to access services that are part of their existing support network and can communicate with command.
 - Your loved one may feel comfortable talking to their Medical Officer (MO) about their options.
 - Other loved ones may like to contact a counselling service such as Open Arms, which is independent from Defence but understands military culture.