

# ADF

## SERVING AND EX-SERVING AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCES (ADF) VETERANS



Primary healthcare services play a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of ex-serving ADF members and their families. The Australian defence Force (ADF) is a tri-service which includes navy, army and air force.

This resource aims to make it easier for primary healthcare staff to understand ADF ex-service patients support needs and connect them to the right care.

### The importance of early identification

Early recognition of issues can be life changing. It's not only important to ask patients if they've done military service and include this in their medical record, but to identify physical and mental health concerns as soon as possible through appropriate and sensitive history-taking.

ADF members and their families are more vulnerable to mental health disorders resulting in a higher need for assistance with understanding and accessing appropriate health services.

ADF veterans' health and welfare needs are also greater and more complex in comparison to the broader Australian community, with ex-serving ADF members tending to face an increased risk of suicide. Because of this, there should be a strong emphasis on mental health supports, safety planning, family involvement and education for ex-ADF patients.

As a GP, nurse or other health professional, you can access training to help you deliver the Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Program and support veterans and their families. For more, see: <https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/providers/programs-services/coordinated-veterans-care/training-and-resources-coordinated-veterans-care-cvc-providers>

### Understanding health needs

**Serving ADF members** are accustomed to accessing ADF healthcare services while serving. But after discharge they often lack experience in navigating the civilian health system and managing and funding their own health care. They may be unaware of Medicare, specialist services and referral processes, wait times, out-of-pocket costs of care and their health literacy skills may be underdeveloped.

**Following discharge**, there is often a significant worsening of mental health symptoms a few years after leaving military service. Ex-serving members may have a lack of social support due to frequent moves associated with military service and experience difficulties maintaining intimate relationships as a result of prolonged deployment.

**Family members** of serving and ex-serving members also face particular health issues that may differ from the civilian population.

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### Veterans

A veteran is a person who is or has served in the ADF.

In 2019, the Australian Government introduced the [Australian Veterans' Recognition \(Putting Veterans and Their Families First\) Bill 2019](#) to acknowledge the uniqueness of military service and the support provided by veterans' families.

Also in 2019, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released [data](#), which showed that from 2001 to 2017 there were 419 certified suicide deaths among men and women with at least one day of Australian Defence Force (ADF) service since 1 January 2001. Of these, 229 (55%) occurred among ex-serving personnel.

Later in 2021, the [Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide](#) was established to focus on the identification of systemic problems and solutions to suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members. The final report is due in September 2024.

### *Veteran Health Check overview*

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has developed a comprehensive [Veteran Health Check guide](#) to assist GPs to support the veteran community:

- All those who transitioned from the ADF can gain access to a one-off Veteran Health Check (VHC) at any time. There is a specific Medicare rebate for this.
- The aim of the VHC is to encourage early intervention to promote better health outcomes for ex-serving ADF patients during their transition to civilian life.
- The health assessment may identify healthcare problems that can sometimes be related to exposure to occupational hazards during service.
- When military service-related health problems are encountered, primary healthcare clinicians should direct the patient to the range of specialist services that are available to veterans through the DVA.
- Patients can gain access to an annual Veteran Health Check every year for the first five years following transition.

### *Veteran Health Check eligibility*

1. **Annual Veteran Health Checks** are fully funded through DVA Veteran Cards and are available from GPs who accept DVA Veteran Cards.
2. **One off veteran health Check:** Are for those people who have served one day continuous full-time service and are fully funded through DVA Veteran Cards and available from GPs who accept DVA Veteran Cards.

If your patient does not have a DVA client, you can use their **Medicare card**, and claim a Medicare rebate.

Note, not all ex-service personnel have a DVA card. For more information on veterans' health cards, go to: [dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/providers/hospitals/dvacards.pdf](https://dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/providers/hospitals/dvacards.pdf)

## Resources for health professionals

<p><b>PDSAs – Quality improvement</b></p>	<p>Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles provide a framework to help develop, manage, and test quality improvement activities.</p> <p>Please contact your Quality Improvement Consultant for assistance with identifying change ideas for your practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical audit - Identify current veterans/DVA card holders.</li> <li>• Ask every patient over 18 years if they have served in ADF.</li> <li>• Record ADF/Vet status in PMS = improved data quality.</li> <li>• Set up recall of ADF members/Vets for annual health check.</li> <li>• Incorporate annual ADF health check into MH clinic or CDMP clinics.</li> <li>• Implement Clinic education-staff training, unique referral sources and appropriate MBS claiming.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Murray HealthPathways</b></p>	<p>Murray HealthPathways aims to guide best-practice assessment and management of common medical conditions, including when and where to refer patients, with guidance on what information is needed</p>	<p>HealthPathways - Veterans' Health Pathways (VHP) will help primary care clinicians support former and transitioning ADF members to navigate the mainstream civilian health care system.</p> <p>Townsville PHN are leading development of the national suite of pathways for veteran health.</p> <p>So far Murray PHN has adopted their pages for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Veteran referral and support</a> with localised supports under the Social &amp; Wellbeing drop-down)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Veteran's health assessment</a></li> </ul> <p>Currently being drafted by Townsville PHN are pathways for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defence and Veteran Family Support</li> <li>• Guide to DVA Compensation Claim Forms</li> <li>• Veteran Care Practice Management</li> </ul>
<p><b>PENCS</b></p>	<p>CAT 4</p>	<p>To effectively manage the care for DVA patients at risk of unplanned hospitalisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Identify DVA patients eligible for Coordinated Veterans Care - CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a></li> </ul>

## Resources

<p><b>RACGP</b></p>	<p>RACGP practice standards for assuring high quality healthcare services for currently serving ADF members.</p> <p>GPs and registrars can access further training through their military employment training and policy through Defence Health Manual and other Garrison health directives and materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Military and veteran health</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">What general practitioners need to know about veterans' health</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Questions to consider</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Standards for Garrison Health Facilities in the Australian Defence Force</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Addiction medicine</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mental health</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Musculoskeletal presentations</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Occupational and environmental medicine</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Pain management</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Education and Training</b></p>	<p>Online training modules, webinars and other resources developed by Black Dog Institute, Open Arms, Phoenix Australia and ProCare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs. <a href="#">Training for providers</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Training and Resources for Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Providers   Department of Veterans' Affairs (dva.gov.au)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Professional development military awareness   Open Arms</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Veterans' health Check</b></p>	<p>Find out how to perform this health check. use the link in the <a href="#">learning resources</a> section to the information for GPs on the DVA website.</p> <p>Identify who is eligible for a veteran health check – use the link in the <a href="#">learning resources</a> section to the information for GPs on the DVA website.</p>	<p>Department of Veterans' Affairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">General practitioner information</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Become a DVA health care provider</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Veteran healthcare cards</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ADF post-discharge GP health assessment: Quick reference guide.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Medical assessment form tips</a></li> </ul> <p>Department of Health. <a href="#">Veteran health checks for former Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel</a></p> <p>Heart health - Sponsored by DVA <a href="#">Heart Health Program (veteranshearhealth.com.au)</a></p>
<p><b>DVA</b></p>	<p>The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) = information about program eligibility, how to claim, the role of a GP and practice nurse, and how to contact the CVC team.</p> <p><a href="#">Homepage   Department of Veterans' Affairs (dva.gov.au)</a></p>	<p>The <a href="#">DVA fee notes for July 2024 are available here</a>, including the item numbers and fees for health services provided to members of the veteran community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The DVA provides a guide for claiming services, which is considered a best practice<sup>1</sup>.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The DVA has designed a custom tool to help check for health conditions that are common to veterans</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Medical assessment form tips</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordinated Veterans' Care Program (CVC)</b></p>	<p>The CVC Program provides proactive care coordination for:</p> <p>Veteran Card holders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Welcome to The CVC Toolbox   CVC Toolbox (dva.gov.au)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Program   Department of Veterans' Affairs (dva.gov.au)</a></li> </ul>

Nurse resources - APNA	CDM and Care Planning Education for CVC Program Nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Support for you and your veteran patient</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Chronic Disease Management and Care Planning Education for CVC Program Nurses</a></li> </ul>
Murray PHN Local supports	Veteran and families service hub - comprehensive and integrated support.	Wodonga Hub at 149 High Street, open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. <b>Call 03 9655 5597 for support.</b>
Medicare	<p>Providers performing an Annual Veterans' Health Check will be able to claim the relevant Veterans Access Payment (VAP) incentive.</p> <p>For information on the available VAP items, please visit the Incentive payments for General Practitioners page</p>	<p>Annual Veteran Health Check (DVA item numbers)</p> <p><b>One-off Veteran Health Check</b></p> <p>(MBS item numbers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MT701 - brief health assessment, lasting no more than 30 minutes</li> <li>• MT703 – standard health assessment, lasting no more than 45 minutes</li> <li>• MT705 – long health assessment, lasting no more than 60 minutes</li> <li>• MT707 – prolonged health assessment, lasting more than 60 minutes</li> <li>• MT701 – brief health assessment, lasting no more than 30 minutes</li> <li>• MT703 – standard health assessment, lasting no more than 45 minutes</li> <li>• MT705 – long health assessment, lasting no more than 60 minutes</li> <li>• MT707 – prolonged health assessment, lasting more than 60 minutes</li> </ul> <p>Find out more on claiming with DVA: <a href="http://dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim">dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim</a></p> <p>More information on DVA fee schedules: <a href="http://dva.gov.au/provider/fees-schedules">dva.gov.au/provider/fees-schedules</a></p> <p>Only one of the DVA item numbers for the Annual Veteran Health Check can be used.</p>
Health promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Day of Action for Women's Health - 28 May</li> <li>• ANZAC Day - 25 April</li> <li>• Remembrance Day - 11 November</li> </ul>	
Funded support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">NLHC – Mental Health</a>: fully funded mental health treatment for eligible veterans, without needing to prove the condition was related to ADF service.</li> <li>• <a href="#">NLHC – Cancer</a>: covers the cost of cancer and pulmonary tuberculosis treatment for eligible veterans, without needing to prove the condition was related to ADF service.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Heart Health Program</a>: a year-long program for eligible veterans to connect, get active, eat well and learn to manage their heart risk and heart health.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Diabetes Membership Reimbursement</a>: DVA will refund you for your affiliated state or territory organisation's diabetes membership expense.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Rehabilitation Appliances Program</a>: provides aids, equipment and modifications to support eligible veterans with diagnosed health conditions to live safely and independently.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme</u>: provides discounted pharmaceuticals to eligible veterans.</li> <li>• <u>Coordinated Veterans Care Program (CVC)</u>: DVA offers access to ongoing care for eligible veterans with diagnosed chronic health conditions.</li> <li>• <u>Veterans' Health Check</u>: DVA funds eligible veterans to receive a one-off or annual comprehensive health assessment with a GP.</li> </ul>	
<b>Aboriginal and Torres strait island</b>	A starting point for accessing supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander serving and ex-serving ADF members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Veterans' Affairs. <u>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans</u></li> </ul>
<b>Women - ADF</b>	<p>Women are estimated to make up 13.4 per cent of Australia's veteran population, and 20.6 per cent of current serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members according to the 2021 Census. However, it is anticipated the actual number of women veterans is higher than reported.</p> <p>International Day of Action for Women's Health is a great reminder for all women in the veteran community to stop, check on their health and wellbeing, and take action to care for their health.</p>	



## Information for patients, carers, families

<b>Patient and Family support</b>	<p>If your patient needs immediate counselling or mental health support: <u>Call the Defence Member and Family Helpline at 1800 624 608</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Open Arms</b> – veterans’ and families counselling offering free, confidential support on 1800 011 046</li><li>• <b>Lifeline:</b> crisis support and suicide prevention help on 13 11 14</li><li>• <b>1800RESPECT:</b> help for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse on 1800 737 732</li></ul> <p>The Australian Defence Force (ADF) provides a range of health services and support for its members, families, reservists, veterans, ex-serving members, and cadets. <u>Veterans and Ex-Serving Members</u></p> <p>Key programs and services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>ADF Family Health Program:</b> <u>Benefits are available for a variety of health services from allied health, general practitioner, specialist (outpatient), and diagnostic and radiology services. <a href="#">ADF Family Health Program   Defence</a></u></li><li>2. <b>Defence Member and Family Helpline:</b> <u>A 24/7 helpline for help and information from Defence Member and Family Support<sup>3</sup>.</u></li><li>3. <b>Employee Assistance Program:</b> <u>This program provides a range of support services<sup>1</sup>.</u></li><li>4. <b>Garrison Health Centres:</b> <u>These centres provide health services to ADF members<sup>1</sup>.</u></li><li>5. <b>Suicide prevention and mental health:</b> <u>The ADF provides resources and support for suicide prevention and mental health<sup>1</sup>.</u></li></ol> <p><b>Ex-service organisations (ESO)</b> supports current and former ADF members and their families. <u>What is an ex-service organisation?</u></p> <p><u>Support for older veterans   My Aged Care</u></p> <p><b>Australian Veterans Children assistance trust</b></p> <p><u>Scholarships   Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (<a href="http://avcat.org.au">avcat.org.au</a>)</u></p>
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For further information or support please contact your local Quality Improvement Consultant, email: [gpsupport@murrayphn.org.au](mailto:gpsupport@murrayphn.org.au) or visit the general practice support page on our website.