

About VVCS

VVCS provides free, confidential counselling and group program services to support the mental health and wellbeing of the Australian veteran and ex-service community and their families.

VVCS counsellors and staff have an understanding of veteran and military culture that assists them to deliver specialised support and care to members of this community.

The VVCS Legacy

The Vietnam War was a difficult chapter in Australia's history. For those who served, the experience forged strong bonds and a commitment to look out for each other. This deep sense of mateship led Vietnam veterans to lobby for a specialised counselling and support service for veterans and their families.

In 1982, the Australian Government established the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS). Access to VVCS has since been extended to veterans of all conflicts, their families, and other members of the ADF and ex-service community. Reflecting this, in 2007 the service was renamed, VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service.

VVCS is the legacy of Australia's Vietnam veterans. They have ensured that future generations of serving men and women will have access to specialised mental health and wellbeing support.

Contact VVCS

Contact VVCS by calling
1800 011 046*

*Free local call. Calls from pay phones and some mobiles may incur charges.

During business hours – connects to the nearest VVCS Centre. After business hours – connects with Veterans Line, the VVCS after-hours telephone crisis counselling service.

Or by visiting
www.vvcs.gov.au



Australian Government

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service



Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

P00479 2015



1800 011 046

www.vvcs.gov.au

Rights and responsibilities

Duty of care and commitment to VVCS clients

Your rights as a WVCS client

As a client of WVCS you should 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 WVCS 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*
- Receive services that comply with appropriate standards of professionalism, competency and accountability.

Your responsibilities as a WVCS client

As a WVCS client, you are responsible for:

- Respecting the right of other clients and staff to privacy and confidentiality
- Treating other WVCS 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 WVCS centre as soon as possible if you are unable to attend
- Respecting centre property
- Honouring agreements made with WVCS about service provision and care.

Protecting your confidentiality and privacy

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

WVCS records are stored securely and every effort is made to ensure that your counselling sessions and contact with WVCS are confidential. WVCS 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.

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, WVCS is required to provide periodic reports regarding your treatment to the ADF Referring Authority.

WVCS are bound by the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). For more information on how WVCS manages personal information, please visit www.wvcs.gov.au/privacy.htm or email wvcs@dva.gov.au and request a copy of our Privacy Policy.

Supporting children and adolescents

WVCS provides family counselling for minors where the issues involved relate to the parent's eligible ADF service. WVCS counselling services provided to minors occur with the active involvement of parents in most circumstances.

WVCS generally requires parental permission for the delivery of services to persons less than 18 years of age (Form: WVCS Parental Consent for WVCS to Provide a Service).

The law regards minors as being capable of giving voluntary informed consent to the provision of health services if they have sufficient maturity, usually around the age of adolescence. WVCS requires parental permission for the referral and treatment of all persons under 15 years of age. For adolescents aged 15 – 17 years, other factors, including the young person's maturity and their preferences regarding parental involvement will be considered prior to services being provided.

Young people have the same right to confidentiality in counselling as adults, within the context of parental responsibility. Children and adolescents should be aware that it is WVCS policy to disclose 'relevant' information to parent/s or legal guardians.

In deciding whether to disclose any information about a child or adolescent to their parent/s or other relevant person, the counsellor will take into account the maturity of the minor, the nature of the issues and any statutory or other obligations which may need to be considered, including the safety of the minor and any protection orders that note the interests of the young person.

WVCS will inform the young person what information will be disclosed.

Feedback

WVCS welcomes and values your feedback as it assists us in improving the standards and quality of the service.

If you have feedback about a WVCS service you should:

Step 1: Contact your local WVCS centre by phoning 1800 011 046 during business hours and ask to speak to the Centre Director or email WVCSFeedback@dva.gov.au

Step 2: If you are not satisfied with the response, please call (02) 6289 6471 during business hours and ask to speak to the Assistant National Manager.

Step 3 If you are still not satisfied with the response, please write to: The Repatriation Commissioner
GPO Box 9998 Canberra ACT 2601

