

Tip Sheet: Understanding Military Mental Health

Military personnel often experience traumatic events or undergo complex challenges during their service. Moving past the stigma around mental health is an important step for moving toward seeking and accessing care. If you or someone you know has served or currently serves in the armed forces and struggles with a mental health concern, explore the tips and resources below for support.

How service affects mental health

Where you are stationed, length and location of deployments, types of commanding officers and whether you see combat can impact your mental health both while serving and as a veteran.

MedicalNewsToday notes that active-duty members:

- 23% have depression
- 11% attempt or contemplate suicide
- 18% of those who consume alcohol and 9% of those who use drugs attempt or contemplate suicide

Mental health concerns don't disappear after discharge.

- 20% of veterans have depression.
- 11% of veterans contemplate or attempt suicide. For those who use drugs, suicidal ideation jumps to 18%, and suicide attempts jump to 30%.
- 8% of veterans who consume alcohol will attempt suicide or experience suicidal ideation.
- 7% of veterans experience PTSD in their lifetime (VA.gov).

Treatment options

While military service can bring many challenges, treatment options are available to help you strengthen your emotional fitness and boost your wellbeing. Options differ depending on your branch, where you are stationed or report. Depending on the severity and if the concern was caused or worsened by your time in the service, you may qualify for disability upon discharge.

It's important to advocate for yourself in these situations. Anytime you suffer an injury or trauma during your time in the service, be sure to document it and keep copies of the paperwork. If documentation doesn't occur immediately, the event's severity may be downplayed or ignored, making it a challenge to access benefits and support.

If you are a veteran, resources through the VA may be available. If you aren't sure whether you qualify, check with your local office or information on the VA website: [Eligibility for VA disability benefits](#).

If you are in a crisis, contact the Veterans Crisis Line by dialing 988 and pressing 1 or send a text to 838255. Assistance is available 24/7/365. Remember, you do not have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to receive support.