



Your Rights and Responsibilities as an Open Arms Client

Open Arms is a counselling service administered by the Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA). Open Arms provides free and confidential counselling, group programs, case management, peer support and mental health training to support the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. This document explains your rights and responsibilities as a client of Open Arms. It is important that you know and understand these rights so you are fully informed before you start using the service. It is also important for you to know how to give feedback about our service.

Your Rights as an Open Arms Client

As a client of Open Arms 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 fair and equal access to Open Arms services, including the use of an interpreter if required.
- receive services that comply with appropriate standards of professionalism, competency and accountability.
- be able to refuse any, or all, assessment and care that is offered.
- be provided with information about your counselling and treatment options and be involved in decision-making regarding these options.
- have your privacy and confidentiality protected, within the limits imposed by law.
- access your records by request, in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

A copy of our (DVA) Privacy Policy is available at <https://www.dva.gov.au/privacy-policy> or upon request

Your Responsibilities as an Open Arms Client

In return, Open Arms asks that you:

- respect the privacy and confidentiality of other clients and staff.
- treat other Open Arms clients and staff in a respectful manner.
- ensure 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.
- attend appointments when they are scheduled and advise the relevant Open Arms centre, as soon as possible, if you are unable to attend.
- respect Open Arms' property.
- do not intentionally spread misinformation, or provide incorrect or misleading advice, that prevents or deters others from accessing Open Arms or DVA services.
- honour agreements made with Open Arms about service and provision of care.

Supporting Children and Young People

In most circumstances the Open Arms' counselling services provided to minors are done so with the active involvement of parents or legal guardians. For minors, Open Arms does not need to seek consent from a parent/legal guardian where the minor is legally competent to provide consent. Open Arms may not seek consent from a parent/legal guardian where doing so might put the minor at risk.

Minors have the same right to confidentiality in counselling as adults. Open Arms may disclose relevant information about minors to their parents or legal guardians, with consent or as otherwise appropriate. Such a decision to disclose will take into account the ability of the minor to consent to the disclosure, the circumstances (including the safety of the minor) and any statutory or legal obligations. Open Arms will seek to inform the minor what information will be disclosed.

Feedback and Complaints

Open Arms welcomes and values your feedback as it assists to improve the service we offer you. Feedback or health complaints can be provided in the following ways:

- Contact Open Arms by calling **1800 011 046** 24 hours, 7 days.
- Visit <https://www.openarms.gov.au/about/contact-us> and leave a message.
- Contact the Commonwealth Health Ombudsman.