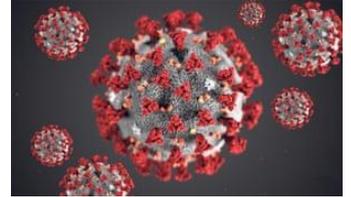**Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling is Australia's leading provider of high quality mental health services to Australian veterans and their families. Open Arms offers free and confidential counselling, peer support, self-help resources, crisis accommodation support, group treatment programs and suicide intervention workshops.**

WE ARE OPEN

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling remains open for business through this period. Clients are being encouraged to access their mental health support through phone and video options. We have also implemented increased hygiene practices and provided guidance for staff and clients on appropriate measures to take if a client attends a centre when they are unwell.

Our free phone support lines remain open 24/7 for assistance by calling 1800 011 046.

Importantly, as a critical government function, we will continue to support our veteran community with our centres remaining open nationally—even if community closures increase.

A NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

The Open Arms' workforce is able to work from home with minimal disruption to services. Our workforce continue to see clients by telephone and online video counselling, and are also continuing their care coordination and community engagement work.

TRAINING & SUPPORT

Open Arms clinicians and Outreach Program Counsellors (OPC) are undertaking training to enhance their ability to provide telephone and online video counselling.

Given the practicalities of working remotely while supporting individuals at risk of suicide, Open Arms clinicians are also undertaking online training to implement the SafeSide Suicide Risk Prevention Framework. This framework prioritises problem solving with the client to mitigate potential risk factors—creating a future focus and enhancing safety planning.

Clinicians also continue to be provided with support for complex clients through the Practitioner Support Network at Phoenix Australia (Phoenix). Specialists from Phoenix will also be conducting online training and professional development activities in areas of emerging need.

CLIENT ASSIST 24/7

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have brought forward the commencement of the 24/7 operation of our Client Assist Contact Centre—enhancing our ability to support Open Arms clients with a workforce trained in veteran issues. Client Assist is accessible 24/7 by calling 1800 011 046.

SAFE ZONE SUPPORT

Safe Zone Support is a free and anonymous counselling line, created for vulnerable cohorts of veterans and their families who might not otherwise seek mental health care due to concerns about protection of anonymity. It is accessible 24/7 by calling 1800 142 072. This service provides immediate access to Open Arms counsellors who understand military culture and experience.

COMMUNITY AND PEER PROGRAM

The Community Engagement Teams and Peer Advisors are actively reaching out to ex service organisations and their community contacts to offer support and promote Open Arms services. They are also investigating a range of ways to be more present in the online environment for their clients so that they can remain connected.

GROUP PROGRAMS

Group Treatment Programs and Suicide Prevention Training have been postponed while investigations continue into appropriate online delivery models. Residential programs are being deferred to later in the year.

All clients who are enrolled in a program will be contacted by an Open Arms team member to receive an offer of 1:1 support via a Counsellor or Peer Advisor.

DIGITAL

The Open Arms website (openarms.gov.au) has been updated with additional self-help resources to support the veteran community, including a specific COVID-19 – Calming and Coping page. Content includes guidance for maintaining wellbeing and staying connected while social distancing, and information on talking to children.

We have also implemented a regular schedule of COVID-19 related posts on our social media channels. Content includes updates on our services, a creative distractions series, and shared content from our partners.