Barriers to Care: Deployment Concerns

In order to deploy, you must be both physically and mentally fit. It’s important to know that only a few mental health conditions or medications may affect deployability.

Myth: I will not be able to deploy if I seek mental health care, list a mental health concern on an assessment, or have a mental health diagnosis.

Fact: Although some serious diagnoses may limit deployability, most mental health conditions do not.

Evidence: DoDI 6490.07 and clinical practice guidance lists the various mental health concerns that may prevent a service member from deploying. This policy states that you should be able to deploy if:
• You’ve demonstrated stability for at least three months
• Your medications have been unchanged for at least three months, and are also available to you while deployed

What opportunities do I have to be screened for mental health before I deploy? If I report any symptoms, what happens?

If you are concerned about your mental health, you will have an opportunity to be screened before deployment. Endorsing mental health symptoms on the Pre-Deployment Health Assessment (Pre-DHA) won’t prevent you from deploying in most cases.

If concerns are identified, you’ll have opportunities to talk to a mental health provider who will make a determination on whether you’re fit for a deployed environment.

In a study of 1,029 military personnel who were seen for mental health concerns in Iraq, 29% had a psychiatric diagnosis in their medical records before they deployed.

What mental health treatment is available for me during my deployment?

Treatment is available if mental health concerns come up while you are deployed.
• Combat Stress Control (CSC) teams, clinics, and programs can provide you with resources and support to manage stress resulting from deployment.
• The Deployment Prescription Program delivers some prescription medications in theater to an APO/FPO address.

Service-Specific Resources:
• Army Behavioral Health Officers (BHOs)
• Navy Embedded Mental Health Providers
• Air Force Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC)
• Marine Corps Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR)
• Virtual Behavioral Health

What are the most common mental health conditions in theater?

• In a study of deployed Army personnel, reasons for seeking treatment broadly fit into three categories: (a) to decrease psychological symptoms (e.g., insomnia, depression; 70.3%); (b) to improve relationships (e.g., marital concerns, communication; 56.4%); and (c) to improve professional skills (e.g., managing time; 41.6%)
• In a study examining the mental health histories of 1,078 American military personnel deployed to Iraq, the most frequent in-theater diagnoses were anxiety (24%), adjustment (23%), and mood (19%) disorders.