

Plain Language Statement

Title	Understanding stigma and help-seeking in emergency services personnel for good mental health	
Short title	Understanding stigma and help-seeking in emergency services personnel	
Protocol number	2020-20383-13285-3	
Principal Investigators	Dr Lisa Dell	(03) 9035 5599
	A/Professor Nicole Sadler	(02) 6243 5134
Co Investigators	Dr Ellie Lawrence-Wood	
	Ms Jenelle Baur	
	Dr Sarah Hewat	

This Participant-Information-Sheet-and-Consent-Form (PICF) tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved participating in this research study. Knowing what is involved can help you decide whether you would like to participate. Please read this information carefully, and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary; there is no obligation to take part in the study. If you choose not to participate there will be no detriment to your employment.

Your answers will be completely confidential and any personal details, which may identify you in any way, will not be passed on to any organisation. Your de-identified data will only be accessible by the Phoenix Australia research team.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, a time will be organised with you to participate in a focus group or one-on-one interview. This is your copy of the Participant Information and Consent Form to keep.

Brief description of the study

Research has shown that high risk organisations such as police and emergency service personnel are associated with higher rates of self-reported psychological distress and some mental health conditions than the general community. Additionally, emergency services personnel who are experiencing sub-clinical mental health concerns (e.g., anger, sleep, relationship difficulties) can be at increased risk of developing mental disorders if they do not

recognise their symptoms, seek help early and get the help they need. Despite the clear need within the police and emergency services community to provide timely access to mental health services and considerable investment in mental health programs and services, there is still unmet need and under-utilisation of the available services. Further, the impact of stigma on help-seeking is complicated. Hence, this projects aims to identify existing help-seeking behaviour and what supports or interventions would be of most interest to police and emergency services personnel who are experiencing sub-clinical mental health issues. This will inform a discussion on current programs and gaps in addressing stigma and help-seeking across the agencies and priority action areas, as well as the generation of options for cross-agency projects(s).

What does participation in this research involve?

Participants will complete either a one-on-one qualitative interview or a small focus group (8 participants' in total) conducted by a researcher from Phoenix Australia.

You will be able to advise us of your preference to participate in either an interview or a focus group.

Interviews will take between 30 and 45 minutes per person with videoconference or teleconference options available. Focus groups will take around 1 hour and will be conducted online (via Zoom or Microsoft teams). You can choose whether you would prefer not to activate your camera and to only use audio. You will also be provided with instructions on how to only display your first name, initials or a nickname to facilitate anonymity.

You will be asked to comment on:

- The earliest signs or changes in mental health and wellbeing in people within your occupation
- The kind of support you or others in your occupation would find most helpful
- The way in which supports for mental health and wellbeing are delivered
- The type of communication messaging you or others in your occupation would find useful (e.g., types of medium, use of particular spokespeople).

Benefits

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research, however possible benefits may include contributing to a better understanding of the help-seeking behaviours and preferences of police and emergency services personnel who are experiencing sub-clinical mental health issues, and that this information could be used to help policymakers to better plan and implement future mental health programs.

Risks of participating

There are no foreseeable risks by participating in this study; however, it is possible that participants may encounter mild distress or discomfort during or following participation in study interviews or focus groups. As a result of participating in an interview or focus group, participants may recall potentially uncomfortable or distressing previous experiences, think about the consequences of difficult events, and consider the impacts to their mental health, identity, or relationships. This is not necessarily something to worry about particularly if these feelings pass quickly, and they are usually reflective of the fact that it was a challenging experience for you. The questions asked in this study are for research purposes only and no action or interventions will be taken based on your responses.

Should you experience significant distress during the study we encourage you to stop the survey and speak with someone you trust, your care provider (e.g., GP, psychologist, chaplain), and/or call the following numbers for ongoing support:

- Lifeline Australia (13 11 14)
- Beyond Blue (1300 224 636)

Withdrawal from the research

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and there is no obligation to take part. If you wish to withdraw you can contact the research team at phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

You may cease your participation in the interview or focus group at any stage during the data collection process. If you choose to withdraw from the study during the interview or focus group, your data will be removed from the study and your withdrawal recorded.

If you choose to withdraw from the study *following* the interview or focus group, when identifiers have been removed from your data, we will not be able to withdraw your data, but your withdrawal will be recorded.

If you choose not to participate or withdraw at any time there will be no detriment to you or your employment.

Privacy and confidentiality

Interviews and focus groups will be digitally recorded and the recordings will be broadly transcribed. Both recordings and transcripts will be stored in a way to ensure you will not be identified, and only members of the research team will have direct access to the data. Any research outputs will only be reported at a group-level and findings from individual responses will not be reported.

Research data collected will be maintained by Phoenix Australia, stored under lock and key or secure password access, and will be kept completely confidential. Your electronic data will be kept for at least 5 years from the date of last research activity. After that time, your data will be securely destroyed by electronic deletion. Only the Phoenix Australia researchers will have access to participant datasets.

Other relevant human research ethics considerations

The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This project has been assigned the protocol number 2020-20383-13285-3. Ethical approval for this project has been granted for a period of 8 months.

This project will be carried out according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

Dissemination of research findings

It is anticipated that the results of this research project may be published in scientific journals. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that no individual can be identified (i.e., aggregated data).

Results of this research will be provided to the Emergency Services Foundation in the form of a report, and this will be shared with all member agencies.

Please contact the research team at phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au if you wish to receive a short summary of the overall findings at the conclusion of the project. Upon your request, the research team will email you a 200-word summary after the study is completed.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research project is being conducted by Phoenix Australia, and funded by the Emergency Services Foundation. No member of the research team will receive a personal financial benefit from your involvement in this research project (other than their ordinary wages).

Further information

If you would like more information about the project, please contact the research team on phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au.

Concerns or complaints

Should you have any complaints or concerns about the manner in which this project is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact the co-ordinating principal investigator Dr Lisa Dell on 03 9035 5959 or lisa.dell@unimelb.edu.au.

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

THIS INFORMATION SHEET IS YOURS TO KEEP

CONSENT FORM

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I give my consent to participate in the project mentioned above on the following basis:

1. I have read the aims of this research project, how it will be conducted, and my role in it. I am also aware I can contact the researchers at Phoenix Australia for any clarity.
2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate stigma and help-seeking in emergency services personnel.
3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only.
4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. I understand that in this project I will be required to complete either an online focus group or one-on-one interview.
6. I understand that my focus group or interview will be audio and/or video-taped.
7. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation, prejudice, or detriment to my employment.
8. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne for at least 5 years following the last research activity.
9. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded; my data will be password protected and accessible only by the named researchers.
10. I understand that I will be asked to give verbal consent at the beginning of my focus group or interview to participate in the study.

I am cooperating in this project on condition that:

- the information I provide will be kept confidential
- the information will be used for this project and future related projects
- the research results will be made available to me at my request and any published reports of this study will preserve my anonymity

If I wish to receive an automatic email that provides a short summary of the overall main findings (in approximately 200 words), I will contact the Phoenix Australia researcher team at phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au to provide my email address.

This is my copy of the participant information sheet and consent form to keep.

Should you have any complaints or concerns about the manner in which this project is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator Dr Lisa Dell on 03 9035 5959 or lisa.dell@unimelb.edu.au.

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