

MENTAL HEALTH

- Veterans Affairs Canada is committed to ensuring eligible Veterans, retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police members and their families have access to the mental health support they need, when they need it.
- Veterans Affairs Canada funds a network of 11 operational stress injury (OSI) clinics across the country and additional OSI Clinic satellite service sites closer to where Veterans live.
- In addition, the department funds a national network of approximately 4,000 mental health professionals and a Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service which offers a 24-hour toll-free help line, face-to-face psychological counselling, bereavement support and referral services, to Veterans, former Royal Canadian Mounted Police members and their family members or caregivers experiencing mental health or personal difficulties.

BACKGROUND – MENTAL HEALTH

Veterans Affairs Canada funds a network of 11 operational stress injury clinics across the country (10 outpatient and 1 inpatient) as well as additional operational stress injury clinic satellite service sites closer to where Veterans live. More operational stress injury clinic satellite service sites will open across the country based on need.

Operational Stress Injury Clinics offer access (through referral) to an interdisciplinary team of mental health professionals who provide specialized assessment and treatment services to Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police members and understand their experience and unique needs.

Veterans Affairs Canada also funds a well-established national network of approximately 4,000 mental health professionals in the community who deliver mental health treatments to eligible Veterans across Canada.

The Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service (1-800-268-7708) or TDD (1-800-567-5803) offers a 24-hour toll-free help line, face-to-face psychological counselling, bereavement support and referral services, to Veterans, former RCMP members, family members, or caregivers experiencing mental health or personal difficulties. Also available as of September 1st, 2018 is *LifeSpeak*, a free online, anonymous and confidential, mental and physical health information and support resource for Veterans and their families.

The Operational Stress Injury Social Support Service offers confidential peer support to Canadian Armed Forces members, Veterans and their families impacted by an operational stress injury. The support is provided by trained peer support and family peer support coordinators, who typically have first-hand experience with these injuries.

A Canadian Veteran-specific version of Mental Health First Aid, launched in partnership with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, provides mental health literacy training to the Veterans community located across the country.

The Mood Disorder Society of Canada has received Government of Canada funding to provide skills development training and support services to assist unemployed Veterans with a mental health condition with the establishment of a new career.

Veterans Affairs Canada has collaborated with a number of partners to develop a series of free online and mobile applications for Veterans and their families including *PTSD Coach Canada*, the *Operational Stress Injury Resource for Caregivers*, *Veterans and Mental Health* tutorial and an Online Caregiver Training Program.

An updated version of PTSD Coach Canada mobile application has been made available in April 2019 on IOS and Androids app stores. It includes reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work, tools for screening and tracking one's symptoms, convenient, easy-to-use tools to help handle stress symptoms and information on crisis support.

On May 7, 2018, Veterans Affairs Canada announced a partnership with the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Related Mental Health Conditions. The Centre of Excellence will expand existing Canadian mental health clinical and research networks

to increase creation and dissemination of new Canadian expertise on military and Veteran mental health, suicide prevention and substance-use disorder issues. The new Centre of Excellence opened in June 2019.

The Government is committing \$147 million over the next six years in order to expand access, as of April 1, 2018, to the Veteran Family Program for families of medically released Veterans across all 32 Military Family Resource Centers, the Family Information Line and CAFconnection.ca.

Additionally, the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada have developed a Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy. The Strategy was released on October 5th, 2017 and includes comprehensive Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada Action Plans. The Veterans Affairs Canada Suicide Prevention Strategy Action Plan identifies 63 Action items.