

SUICIDE PREVENTION –
CANADA/DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE) SUICIDE
PREVENTION STRATEGY

- Our Government is committed to suicide prevention.
- That is why, on October 5, 2017, our government proudly released a Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy that is holistic and is based on the latest scientific evidence in the area of suicide prevention.
- The new strategy builds on the strong foundation of Government of Canada programs, services and supports currently available to those who serve or who have served.
- It provides the way forward to continue to improve assistance to Veterans and their families, including during the transition from military to civilian life.

BACKGROUND – SUICIDE PREVENTION

Ongoing for Veterans Affairs: Work with National Defence to develop a Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy for Canadian Armed Forces personnel and Veterans.

- On October 5, 2017, the Minister of National Defence, the former Minister of Veterans Affairs and Chief of the Defence Staff announced a Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy that seeks to understand, address and mitigate risks of suicide across the entire military and Veteran community.
- The Strategy represents a new, holistic, pan-Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada approach to suicide prevention. The approach combines efforts in education, communications, support initiatives, mental health and health care. While it might be impossible to prevent every suicide, meaningful action can be taken to reduce risk factors and augment protective factors in the area of Veteran suicides.
- To this end, the Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy identifies seven Lines of Effort and more than 158 action items between the two departments, including a jointly managed Seamless Transition Task Force to ensure a coordinated approach during the transition from military to civilian life.
- The Strategy is aligned with the Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention, builds on the recent Canadian Armed Forces Expert Panel Report on Suicide Prevention, and draws from the latest research on this topic.
- Finally, the Strategy addresses the different domains of well-being (social, financial, vocational, health and housing). This approach is important given that the 2017 Report of **Suicide Mortality in the Canadian Armed Forces (1995 to 2016)** reports that 85 % of Regular Force males who died by suicide had at least one work or family-life stressor. These stressors included failing relationships, a friend or family member's suicide or death, a family member's or personal illness, debt, professional or legal problems.
- Meanwhile, the recently released 2017 **Veteran Suicide Mortality Study, which reports on suicides in Canadian Veterans over a 37-year period (1976 to 2012)**, reveals that male Veterans had an overall 1.4 times higher risk of dying by suicide compared to males in the Canadian general population, with the youngest males being at highest risk. Female Veterans had an overall 1.8 times higher risk of dying by suicide compared to females in the Canadian general population.
- More analysis of this data is underway. Meanwhile, Veteran Affairs Canada's Suicide Prevention Strategy Action Plan has been adjusted to ensure that attention is placed on addressing the problem of suicide in female Veterans, and further action to address the new information from this study will follow.
- The department is highly committed to doing all that can be done to prevent suicides of Canadian Veterans who have sacrificed so much to serve their country.
- The Veterans Affairs Canada Suicide Prevention Strategy Action Plan identifies 63 Action items, 17 of which have been fully completed.