



Government
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Veterans
Ombudsman

Ombudsman
des vétérans

Veterans Mental Well Being: Canadian Perspective

9th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces

Veterans Ombudsman

October 10 2017

Canada 

Office of the Veterans Ombudsman

Background

- The Veterans Ombudsman is an **independent, arms-length officer**, created in 2007 by Order in Council.

Our Practices

- **Evidence-informed** analysis and reporting
- Foundation of fairness:
 - *Adequacy*
 - *Sufficiency and*
 - *Accessibility*

Overview

Canadian Context:

- Basic Statistics
- Health Care Delivery Challenges
- List of Departmental Programs

My Perspective: ***Building Pathways to Mental Well-being***

- Indirect approach to supporting mental well-being
- Addressing purpose in Veterans lives
- Supporting “difficult” clients

Context – Statistics March 2017

36.6 Million = Canadian Population

100,000 = Size of Canadian Armed Forces

600,300 = Estimated Canadian Veteran Population

Veteran	Veteran Affairs Clients	Mental Health Condition	%	Clients with PTSD	% of Mental Health Clients with PTSD
Canadian Armed Forces	93,123	18,826	20%	13,342	71%
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	12,482	4,469	36%	3,658	82%

60% of Veteran Clients with a mental health condition are between ages 40 – 59

Ages 40-59 represent 32% of the total Veteran population

60% of Veteran Clients with a mental health condition are married or have a common law partner

Context – Canadian Challenges

Size of the Country

10 Provinces & 3 Territories
Each Providing Health Care
Each with Differing levels
Of Service



Shortage of Mental Health Care Professionals

Context – Departmental Programs

Canadian Armed Forces

- All Health Services Provided
- Chaplain Services Provided
- 24/7 Member Help Line
- 24/7 Family Info Line
- Operational and Trauma Stress Support Centres
- Military Family Resource Centre Health Programs
- Family Liaison Officer
- Sexual Misconduct Response Centre
- Member Peer Support (OSISS)
- Health Insurance benefits

<https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Programs-Services/Mental-Health/Mental-Health-Programs-and-Services.aspx>

Veterans Affairs Canada

- Treatment support
- Case Management
- 24/7 Veteran help line
- Rehabilitation Services
- Disability Benefits
- Clinical Care Manager
- Operational Stress Injury Clinics
- Family Peer Support (OSISS)
- Mental First Aid
- Bereavement Support (HOPE)
- Publications/Information

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/services/health/mental-health/other-services>

OVO Perspectives – Indirect Approach

OVO does not have medical professionals on staff

- Value and effort needed to comment on the efficacy of treatment programs is questionable when professional governing bodies already monitor standards in the health care community

With OVO mandate and resources, Office can have greater influence and effect by improving the environment so that mental well-being is enabled by:

- Eliminating Barriers to Transition
- Ensuring Access to Programs
- Addressing Financial Security
- Promoting Veteran-centric Service Delivery
- Providing better supports to family and caregivers

OVO Perspectives – Addressing Purpose

For a transition to be successful, the focus must be on the future not the past

“Veterans need hope. To have hope, you need forward movement. To have forward movement, you need better options ahead of you than behind you.”

It is about finding a new purpose which means Veterans' outcomes need to be clearly defined

“Let's go beyond today's ideas and shape tomorrow by clearly defining Veterans' outcomes – the end results that we want to achieve – and figure out the steps needed to obtain those results for Veterans and their families.”

Moving forward is built on a strong partnership between the Veteran and the supporting system: There must be **Trust**

- Because that trust and support is missing some Veterans' become fixated on fighting the system and it becomes their purpose

Having purpose is a key element of mental well being

OVO Perspectives – Difficult Clients

“There are no difficult clients there are only clients with difficulties”

- Effective support needs to be provided which means solutions have to be found to get better engagement and build that partnership that creates trust.
- Departmental restrictions on how the Veteran engages their staff starts to off load case management onto the Ombudsman Office. So Office needs to mediate solutions that create engagement that does not require a third party being involved
- Frequent callers can create dependency situations so there is balance between resolving the issue and being too engaged. Strategies to manage expectations and set the stage for dis-engagement have to be considered from the beginning

OVO Perspectives – Summary

OVO Mental Well-being efforts

Systemically by improving the environment through:

- Addressing barriers to transition
 - Financial security
 - Access to treatment
- Robust Rehabilitation that creates purpose
- Increased support to families and caregivers
- Advocating for clearly defined Veteran outcomes

Individually by

- intervening and mediating for clients

If we can remove the worries about transition and build trust, then the Veteran can focus on addressing their health conditions which will enable finding a viable path forward.

Contact Us

1-877-330-4343

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Office hours (Monday to Friday):

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (NDT)
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (ADT)
7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (EDT)
6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (CDT)
5:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (MDT)
4:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (PDT)



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