



Life after the Force: Exploring the well-being and mental health needs of RCMP Veterans and their Families

Presentation to: 2026 CIPSRT Conference

May 5, 2026
atlasveterans.ca



The Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families wishes to acknowledge the service and sacrifices of all Canadian Armed Forces Veterans and former serving Royal Canadian Mounted Police members as well as their Families.

The courage and commitment of Veterans has protected our nation as well as countless others around the world. We thank Veterans and Families for their contributions to our country.

Why we exist

To move toward a better mental health system so that **Veterans and Families** can access the care they deserve.



Why this work matters

The well-being and mental health needs of Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Veterans and their Families are not well understood.

- Very little research on post-service experiences
- Barriers to accessing care persist
- Service use does not match clear indicators of need
- “You’re on your own after retirement”

What we did

Co-developed discussion questions with RCMP Veterans and Families

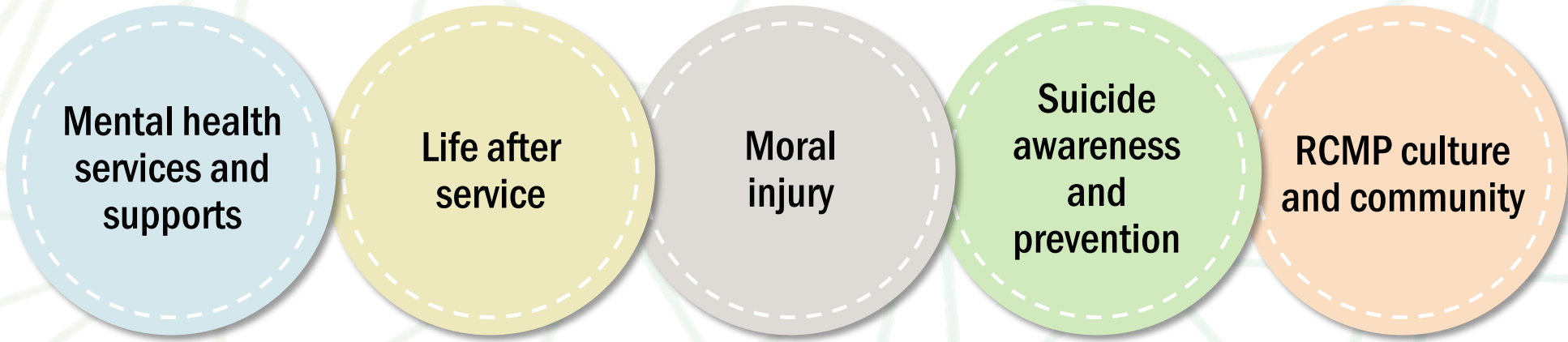
Hosted 6 dialogue sessions across Canada (in-person and virtual, June 2025 – February 2026)

Engaged 50 participants, including 5 peers to co-facilitate each session

Hosted dedicated sessions for women, Francophones and Families

Analyzed what we heard (themes and opportunities), synthesized into a public report

Topics we explored



What we heard

8

broad themes

12

community-specific
themes

Interpreting these findings

- Participants represented a sample, not the full range of experiences or perspectives
- Not all topics discussed in every session
- Interpretation of questions shaped by participant experiences
- Focus on post-service experiences
- Participants had overlapping identities



Occupational culture discourages help-seeking and amplifies psychological risk



The diagram features an iceberg floating in a light blue sea. The tip of the iceberg, which is above the water line, is white and contains the text 'Getting help'. The much larger part of the iceberg, which is submerged below the water line, is dark blue and contains a list of cultural factors. The water line is a horizontal white line that separates the visible tip from the hidden base.

Getting help

- Stigma
- Career risk
- “Push through” mindset
- Duty first
- Invincible
- Help *others*
- “No time to feel”

Occupational culture discourages help-seeking and amplifies psychological risk

Implications

- Recognize that prevention matters
- Normalize early help-seeking
- Embed mental health literacy, coping skills and care across members' careers
- Address persistent recruitment shortages and under-staffing
- Strengthen trauma-informed leadership training

Administrative complexity shifts the burden of navigation onto injured members

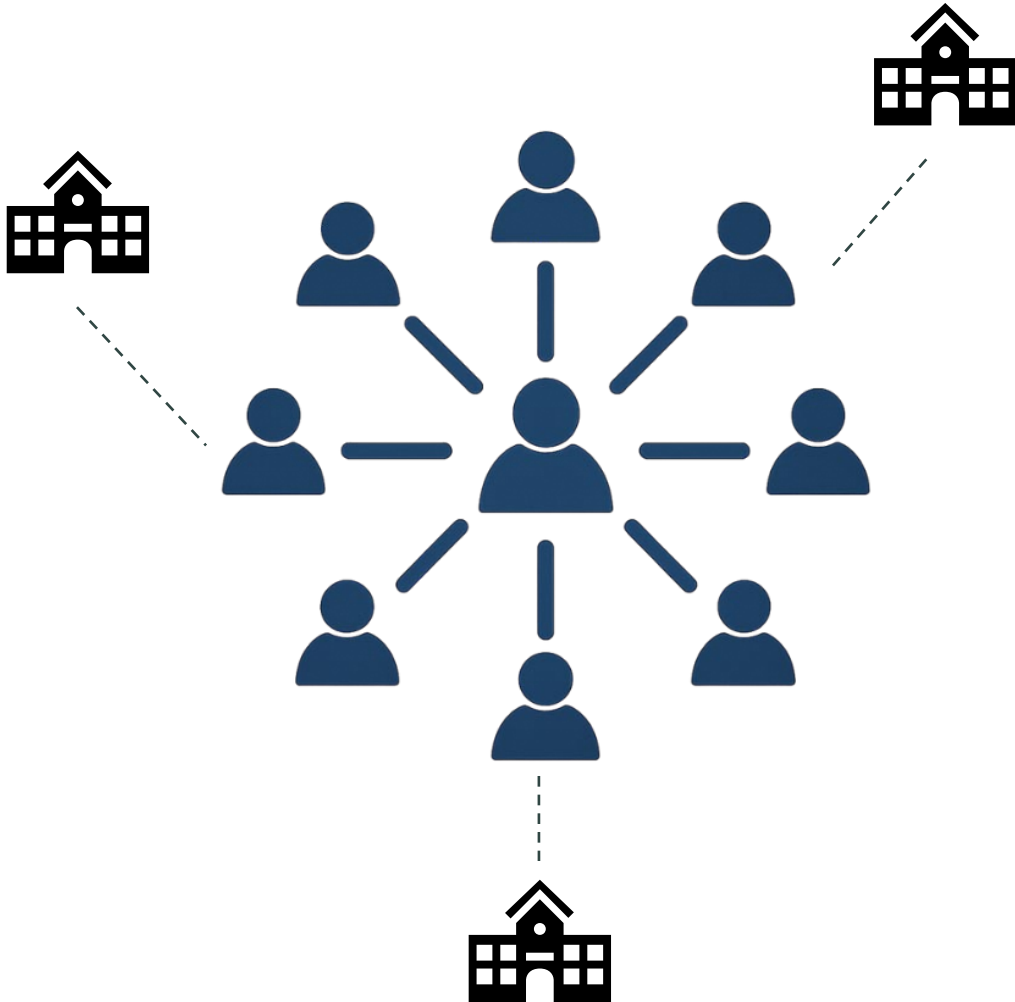
Insights

- Gaps in service records
- Claims processes are complex and difficult to navigate
- Varying levels of awareness of benefits and programs available
- Inconsistent case management support
- Informal networks fill gaps

Implications

- Provide proactive navigation support upon release
- Simplify and streamline claims processes
- Ensure clear, consistent and proactive guidance on available benefits and how to access them
- Reduce strain on informal networks

Peer connection and belonging are critical protective factors



Implications

- Formalize and resource peer support roles and networks
- Integrate peer support into systems of care
- Leverage multiple outreach channels to reach those who may be disconnected
- Facilitate safe connections between those with shared experiences

Mental health challenges affect the whole Family

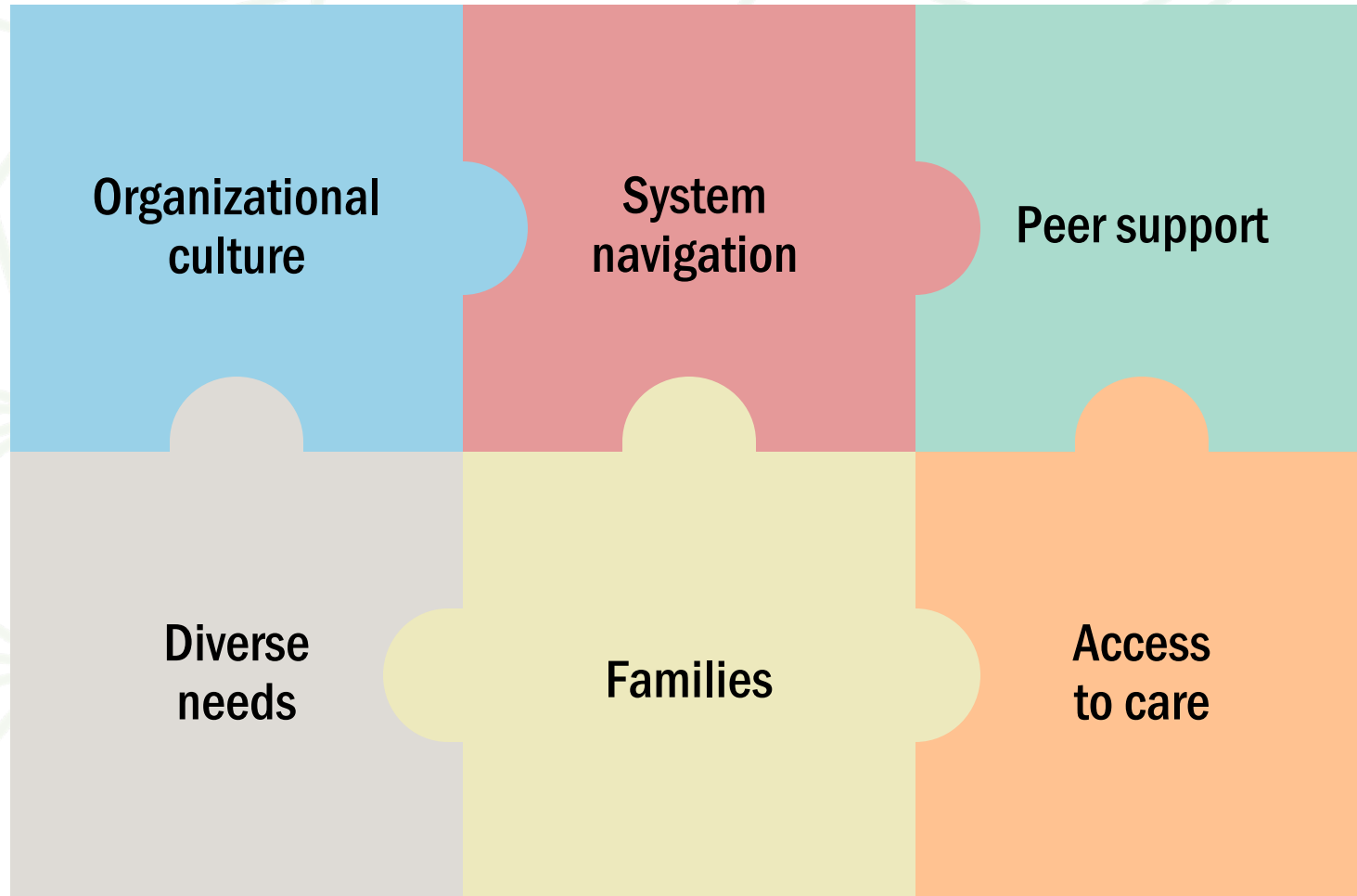
Insights

- Exposure to traumatic stories and loved one's untreated trauma
- Perceived pressure to identify, monitor or “fix” Veteran's mental health issues
- Limited direct support for Families that is independent of the Veteran's eligibility

Implications

- Provide more Family-specific education during transition
- Increase access to Family-specific supports that don't depend on Veteran's participation
- Ensure access to support for children that extends into adulthood

Bringing it together



Stay connected

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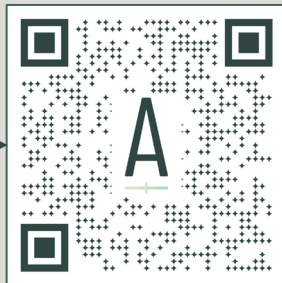
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Thank you!

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