



Government
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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

JOINT SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY

ANNEX

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Canada

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY ACTIONS

The following is a complete list of the current Canadian Armed Forces actions planned and under-way under the Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy. These represent a comprehensive approach to the issue, and draw from many program areas offering, for example, financial support, physical rehabilitation, or resources for family members. Some of the actions described here are major programs or new projects. Others are smaller changes to procedures. All these actions are unified in addressing the seven Lines of Effort defined by this Strategy. Taken together, these actions will make a major difference in reducing suicide risk for the benefit of all CAF members, Veterans, and their families.

Actions are organized by Line of Effort. Where relevant, status information and projected completion dates for projects are provided. Items labelled “Enhancing” are initiatives already in place that are being enhanced while in operation.

Line of Effort 1: Communicating, Engaging & Educating

- 1.1 **Produce a CAF Suicide Prevention Communication Plan** | aimed at both external and internal audiences [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 10, on encouraging safe media reporting of suicides]
Status: In development Target date: Fall 2017
- 1.2 **Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence (joint) Mental Health in the Workplace Strategy** | Will maintain a healthy workplace environment, which is a protective factor. May also leverage the Defence Occupational Health and Safety Network to train first responders to provide an initial response to persons in crisis.
Status: In development Target date: Spring 2018
- 1.3 **Operation HONOUR** | Operation HONOUR is the Canadian Armed Forces’ mission to eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour (HISB) in the Canadian military. The Sexual Misconduct Response Centre (SMRC) was established to provide support to CAF members who have experienced or witnessed inappropriate sexual behaviour and counsellors are ready 24/7 to provide support with information and referrals (Operation HONOUR is relevant under several Lines of Effort).
Status: Current
- 1.4 **Mental Fitness & Suicide Awareness Training** | Provides one day of training to CAF (and DND) members. The first half is on developing resilience. The second half is on increasing suicide awareness, reducing stigma and providing intervention. It helps prepare leaders to promote mental fitness and mitigate incidence of mental health injuries including self-harm and suicide.
Status: Enhancing
- 1.5 **Alcohol, Other Drugs, Gaming, Gambling Awareness for Supervisors** | Provides supervisors with information to be aware of the harmful effects and risks associated with these behaviours, and how to take appropriate action.
Status: Enhancing
- 1.6 **Injury Prevention and Active Living** | Provides members with the information they need to promote an active lifestyle while preventing unnecessary injuries.
Status: Existing
- 1.7 **Integrate "Bell Let's talk Day" into CAF/DND activities to educate members on Mental Health issues and reduce stigma** | This is implemented across the CAF, and focuses on increasing awareness and reducing stigma associated with mental health issues.
Status: Existing
- 1.8 **Annual Update of the Chief of Defence Staff Guidance to Commanding Officers and their Leadership Teams**
Status: Existing (annually)

Line of Effort 2: Building & Supporting Resilient CAF Members & Veterans

- 2.1 **Optimizing Performance Force and Family** | This initiative recognizes risks associated with Canadian Special Operations Forces Command service, and sets conditions to optimize rehabilitation by promoting resilience.
Status: In development
- 2.2 **Special Operations Mental Agility (SOMA)** | This initiative promotes mental wellness, recognition of signs of optimum and compromised mental health, and teaches techniques for daily routines to manage stressors in the workplace.
Status: In development Target date: Fiscal years 2018-19 through 2019-20
- 2.3 **Transition Out of CANSOFCOM Program** | Transition Out of Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Program incorporates lessons learned and promotes the use of local CAF/VAC transition services specifically for personnel transitioning out of Special Operations Forces.
Status: In development Target date: Fiscal year 2020-21
- 2.4 **R2MR Occupation Specific Training & Performance Coaching** | Promotes competency development for those who work in high risk occupations and are likely to require effective stress training techniques.
Status: Enhancing
- 2.5 **R2MR Suicide Prevention and Gatekeeper Training** | Aimed at increasing mental health literacy, and includes the leader's role in overcoming barriers to care. Occupation-specific training includes Managing Persons in Crisis, Policing Persons in Crisis, and Suicide Intervention for those employed in gatekeeper roles.
Status: Enhancing
- 2.6 **Operational / Occupational Selection Centres / Processes** | Aim to select specific occupational personality attributes, such as emotional stability and psychological resilience associated with positive coping skills required for job-related stress. Assessment centers provide realistic job previews and work-sample tests to ensure candidates are the right "fit", thereby reducing training failures and withdrawals.
Status: Enhancing
- 2.7 **Health & Wellness Committees** | These bring key Base/Wing personnel together to facilitate coordinated local service delivery of health, physical fitness, recreation & family programming.
Status: Enhancing
- 2.8 **Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) Mental Health & Resilience Training** | This program has been ongoing since 2008. This is a standardized, evidence-based mental health and resilience training program to increase awareness of mental health, decrease stigma and other barriers to care, encourage early recognition and access to mental health care, and provide tangible and adaptable skills for military personnel to manage the demands of military service.
Status: Enhancing
- 2.9 **Mission Ready Program** | This program aims to promote overall resilience of soldiers in all aspects of their training, employment, and operational work through a health and fitness based culture.
Status: Enhancing
- 2.10 **Achieve Spiritual Resilience** | This is a program that helps develop moral and spiritual strength of CAF members and families in line with the Spiritual Wellness strategy.
Status: Existing
- 2.11 **Physical Fitness Program** | This includes group and collective training, individual training, and recreational and competitive sports to build resilience and promote good health.
Status: Enhancing
- 2.12 **CAF Sports Program** | This program includes individual and team sport skills instruction, training and competition at all levels of participation. The aim is to strengthen the CAF culture of fitness, promote physical and social wellness, foster the development of leadership skills, discipline, sportsmanship and warrior spirit, and develop Esprit de Corps, teamwork and morale.
Status: Existing
- 2.13 **Strengthening the Forces Program** | Includes training and education to support the following initiatives: Addiction Free Living; Social Wellness; Injury Prevention; Nutritional Wellness; Alcohol, Other Drugs, Gaming, Gambling Awareness for Supervisors; Mental Fitness and Suicide Awareness Training. There is also a Service Level Agreement with Director - Alternate Dispute Resolution to provide an Interpersonal-communication course dealing with conflict and improving communication in personal relationships.
Status: Enhancing

2.14 **SISIP Personal Financial Education Program (PFEP) & Financial Counselling Program (FCP)** | Together, these two programs provide CAF personnel with life skills training on personal financial management as well as training to CAF supervisors in methods to help subordinates who experience financial difficulties.

Status: Existing

2.15 **Support Our Troops Fund** | This provides financial support to CAF members, veterans, and their families specifically for rehabilitation, education, financial assistance in the case of injury or death of a CAF member due to service, and urgent and extraordinary financial demands where the ability to provide family necessities is at risk. The program is funded through individual and corporate donations, proceeds from third party events, Yellow Ribbon merchandise, and contributions by external organizations.

Status: Existing

2.16 **PSP Deployment Support to Members** | This initiative provides morale and wellness support services to CAF personnel while deployed on operations.

Status: Existing

2.17 **Soldier On Program** | This program supports serving members and veterans who acquired a permanent physical or mental health illness or injury while enrolled in the CAF, regardless of whether it is attributable to service or not. Since its inception in 2007, Soldier On has helped more than 2,200 ill and injured members to obtain sporting or recreational equipment, gain access to high-level training from world-class instructors and supported their participation in a wide range of structured activities from alpine skiing to fishing to adventure expeditions.

Status: Existing

2.18 **National Peer Support Program (NPSM) Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS)** | This program provides a national peer support network for CAF members, veterans and their families who have experienced an operational stress injury. This peer support network includes 63 screened and trained personnel in more than 33 locations across Canada who participate by listening to those who are suffering, drawing on similar experiences, and providing assistance and guidance

using resources available from the Department of National Defence, VAC, and the community.

Status: Existing

2.19 **Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program (CFMAP)** | This program is a confidential counseling service that provides up to ten sessions of counseling support to members and their families to assist them dealing with life stressors. It also provides unlimited services to bereaved family members of deceased CAF members.

Status: Existing

Line of Effort 3: Connecting & Strengthening CAF Members & Veterans through Families and Community

3.1 **Psycho-educational Information on Mental Health for Families** | This program provides resources and support to military families to reduce stressors and help families cope. It includes Minds that Matter, Operational Stress Injury Resources for Caregivers, Family Violence Prevention, Road to Mental Readiness for Families, and the You're Not Alone Guide.

Status: Enhancing

3.2 **Military Family Services - National Facebook Groups** | Connect military families to provide a sense of community, and a source of information and social support to CAF members, veterans, and their families and friends.

Status: Enhancing

3.3 **Military Family Services - MFRC Information and Referral Services** | Provides assistance to families seeking health care and support by providing information and referral services when required.

Status: Enhancing

3.4 **Military Family Services - Family Information Line** | Provides bilingual services, available 24/7, to the CAF community. Counsellors offer information, referrals, crisis management, suicide prevention intervention & supportive counselling.

Status: Enhancing

3.5 **Military Family Services - National Website on Programs / Resources at CAFConnection.ca; a Family Guide to the Military Experience** | This is

a user-friendly, mobile-responsive interface for CAF members and their families where all national and local information about morale and welfare programs can be accessed in one single online destination.

Status: Enhancing

3.6 Military Family Services - Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) Program for Families | This program builds awareness of mental illness and operational stress injuries through education, to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, and to increase understanding and support for these conditions.

Status: Enhancing

3.7 Family Liaison Officer | Family Liaison Officers are assigned to Next of Kin when a CAF member has died while serving. They also respond to the needs of families of CAF personnel who are coping with an illness, injury and/or special need.

Status: Enhancing

3.8 Military Family Services (MFS) - National Health Care Initiatives (Grouping of Service Providers) | Assists military families in finding health care providers.

Status: Enhancing

3.9 Shoulder to Shoulder | This is an existing network of programs that provide support to bereaved and grieving families of deceased CAF members.

Status: Enhancing

3.10 Family Violence Prevention Awareness Campaign ("Take a Stand") | The "Take a Stand" campaign promotes awareness, responsibility and prevention among CAF members and their families.

Status: Enhancing

3.11 Officer / Non-Commissioned Members Mess | Officer / Non-Commissioned Members Mess facilities and functions facilitate social connections with colleagues and families through their events.

Status: Existing

3.12 Community Recreation Programming | Connects the military community and families while promoting active living and healthy life-styles. This program offers over 7,000 instructor-led programs to over 80,000 children, youth and adults. All recreation staff are trained in the "High Five" program.

Status: Enhancing

3.13 National Peer Support Program (NPSP) Helping Our Peers by Providing Empathy (HOPE) Program | This is a National Peer Support Program that delivers confidential bereavement peer support for families who have lost a loved one in the CAF.

Status: Existing

3.14 Sentinel Program | The Sentinel Program is comprised of trained and supervised non-professionals of all ranks who, through their informed presence within their units, serve an important role in the prevention, detection and support of comrades in distress.

Status: Existing

Line of Effort 4: Providing Timely Access to Effective Health Care & Support

4.1 Clinician's Handbook on Suicide Prevention | The Handbook is currently being finalized by the Director Mental Health in coordination with the Canadian Psychiatric Association.

Status: In development Target date: 2017

4.2 Explore the Implementation of suicide-specific training for clinicians such as "Suicide Risk Assessment and Safety Planning" | Further training for clinicians, in addition to the Clinician's Handbook (4.1) under consideration

Status: In development Target date: 2017

4.3 Enhance the application of advanced communications technology to support health care delivery

| Creation of telemedicine specialist positions will ensure proper support for this initiative [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 9: "consider novel methods for delivery of psychological and pharmacological interventions"].

Status: In development Target date: 2018

4.4 Improve Engagement of Patients and Families in Program planning and Health Care Delivery

| This is an emerging area requiring specific expertise and is part of the Surgeon General Integrated Health Strategy.

Status: In development Target date: 2018-19

4.5 Operation HONOUR: Support to members suffering from HISB | Operation HONOUR is the Canadian Armed Forces' mission to eliminate

harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour (HISB) in the Canadian military. Support to members suffering from HISB includes several initiatives in different stages of development: Sexual Violence Victim Liaison Assistance Program; Training for front line victim support workers; Revised policies, "Respect in the CAF" mobile application / support tool; Expanded options for reporting HISB.

Status: In development Target date: 2017-18-19

- 4.6 **Health & Wellness Self-Assessment Checklists and Procedures** | These will allow members to self-assess their Health & Wellness and recognize potential risks or areas of concern. The intent is to encourage and enable people to seek help if they are at risk.

Status: In development Target date: 2019

- 4.7 **PSP Deployment Support Ops to add Suicide Prevention Program** | This will add a Suicide Prevention Program to Deployment Support Operations. It will include on-site protocols, weekly reminders, and a reporting structure for managers to gather statistics. The Suicide Prevention course will be designed specifically for a deployed operational working environment.

Status: In development Target date: 2017

- 4.8 **Clinical Care for both Physical and Mental Health issues** | This program will continue to be provided by CAF Health Services [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 8: "offer integrated treatment of addictions and mental health disorders"]. CAF members receive comprehensive mental health care services based on evidence-based treatments and implementation of emerging medicinal practices.

Status: Existing

- 4.9 **CAF Mental Health Centre Of Excellence** | Exists to ensure leading edge treatment is available to CAF members that is based on the biological underpinning of disease. A three-part mandate ensures: 1) Oversight, coordination, and participation in leading-edge mental health research; 2) Optimal clinical education for care providers within DND; and 3) Continued improvements in clinical care based on professional standards and leading edge research.

Status: Enhancing

Line of Effort 5: Promoting Well-being of CAF Members through their Transition to Civilian Life

- 5.1 **Stand up a new CAF Transition Group** | New CAF Transition Group will oversee CAF member transitions. This Group will be staffed from experts in human resources and personnel administration and will be responsible to ensure support to ill and injured who are preparing to return to duty or transition to Veteran status as well as to ease the transition to post military life for all CAF members. This group will be comprised of a headquarters element based on existing Director of Casualty Support Management in coordination with Veterans Affairs Canada. All tactical level Base/Wing Transition Centres will report to this headquarters.

Status: In development Target date: Spring 2018

- 5.2 **Establish Transition Centres with Integrated CAF / VAC Resources** | As directed in SSE, initiative 27, Transition Centres comprised of Integrated Personnel Service Transition Teams will be implemented to manage all significant CAF transitions, including release and retirement from the CAF.

Status: In development Target date: Spring 2019

- 5.3 **Continue work of CAF / VAC Seamless Transition Task Force** | The Task Force is working collaboratively to review and streamline processes and develop necessary supports for CAF members transitioning to post-service life. [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 7: "Create a working group to develop supports for CAF members transitioning to civilian life"].

Status: In development

- 5.4 **Implement the CAF / VAC Transition Model Project Plan** | This involves expanding interoperability between CAF and VAC, streamlining administration processes and enhancing case management during the transition period, thereby ensuring that CAF members and their families have all the necessary resources to experience a successful transition.

Status: In development Target date: Spring 2019

- 5.5 **Building pre-transition awareness** | Inform CAF Members, and their Families, earlier in their Careers about the Importance of Transition

- Planning and about VAC Benefits, Services and Supports.
Status: Enhancing Target date: Spring 2019
- 5.6 **Provide an Orientation Process for CAF Members and their Families at each CAF Posting** | This is to facilitate, support, and reduce the stressors involved in this process. This action item is under the aegis of the Seamless Transition Task Force.
Status: In development Target date: Spring 2019
- 5.7 **Introduce Veteran Service Agent check-in Calls to Releasing Members 30 days prior to Release as a follow up to the Transition Interview** | This will enable agents to identify any CAF members who are having difficulties with release administration, and to assist them in resolving problems in a timely manner.
Status: In development Target date: April 2019
- 5.8 **Actively Promote and Work to Register all CAF Members and Veterans to My VAC Account** | The majority of veterans are not currently registered. Encouraging registration will enable better tracking of CAF Members and Veterans and ensure timely access to information on VAC benefits and services when they require it.
Status: In development
- 5.9 **Implement the Guided Transition Support Initiative** | Completion of pilot studies to ensure all releasing members and veterans who need assistance will receive continuous and seamless service through their transition.
Status: In development Target date: 2018-19
- 5.10 **Align CAF / VAC Medical Transitions** | A Seamless Transition Task Force Medical Oversight Team will ensure a seamless transition for releasing or retiring CAF members through alignment of CAF / VAC medication formularies and treatment benefits.
Status: In development Target date: 2018
- 5.11 **Standardize CAF / VAC Case Management Support** | Support for all ill and/or injured CAF members in line with the Integrated Case Management Practice Model, through all stages of recovery, rehabilitation, and transition into post-service life.
Status: In development Target date: 2018
- 5.12 **VAC Transition Interview** | This will incorporate new checklists and procedures to ensure effective screening for areas of potential risk and identify areas where support is required.
Status: Enhancing Target date: 2018-19
- 5.13 **VAC Transition Checklist** | This will consist of a CAF/VAC coordinated self-assessment tool that enables CAF members and veterans to self-assess and identify specific areas requiring support and assistance.
Status: In development Target date: Spring 2019
- 5.14 **Implement the Joint CAF / VAC Employment Strategy** | The joint CAF / VAC Employment Strategy aims to enhance career transition services to assist with civilian employment readiness post-release, and connect employers with professionals and skilled-workers, thereby fostering a vibrant Veteran employment community.
Status: Enhancing Target date: Spring 2019
- 5.15 **Veteran Family Program** | This program is intended to support the on average 1,200 CAF members who medically release each year, 700 military spouses, and 900 children impacted by their release and transition into civilian life.
Status: In development Target date: Spring 2018
- 5.16 **Use the Integrated Case Management Practice Model** | Provide to all ill and/or injured CAF members standardized case management support, as per the Integrated Case Management Practice Model, through all stages of recovery, rehabilitation, and transition into civilian life for all case managed CAF members or veterans.
Status: In development Target date: Phase 1 Spring 2018, Phase 2 Spring 2019
- 5.17 **Develop End-to-End Online Benefit Applications and Approvals Processes for Releasing Members** | This facilitates timely CAF member applications that track progress through an online system of reviews, appeals, and correspondence for VAC programs.
Status: In development Target date: Spring 2019
- 5.18 **Enhance CAF / VAC Websites and CAF / VAC Social Media Presence** | The intent is to make all Information on VAC Services and Supports easily Accessible and Comprehensible for Releasing CAF Members, Veterans and their Families.
Status: In development
- 5.19 **Review, Develop, Expand and Deliver Updated Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN) Seminars under the SCAN 2.0 Transformation** | This will include an online SCAN on Demand video series accessible 24/7 online.
Status: Enhancing

Line of Effort 6: Protocols, Policies, and Processes to Better Manage Risk & Stress

- 6.1 **Review and Update Policies and Guidance (1)** | Review and update policies and guidance related to, or impacting on, suicidality and mental health to ensure consistency and relevance with current research.
Status: Enhancing Target date: 2019
- 6.2 **Review and update Policies and Guidance (2)** | Review and update policies and guidance protocols in handling suicide ideation, prevention, intervention, and postvention to ensure consistency and relevance with current research.
Status: Enhancing Target date: 2018
- 6.3 **The Journey** | “The Journey” is a defence policy implementation tool. It is a people-oriented philosophical framework that will modernize the way the Canadian Armed Forces supports our members, Veterans, and their families as they serve and beyond. The goal of The Journey is to enhance military capability by creating a new military experience. It will deliver an adaptable career model for our people, respect the unique demands on military families, and recognize the enduring affiliation of Veterans.
Status: In development
- 6.4 **Operation HONOUR: Review and Update Applicable Policies and Procedures** | Review and Update Applicable Policies and Procedures to include definitions of harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour (HISBs), address gaps, and clarify direction.
Status: In development Target date: 2017-18
- 6.5 **CAF Diversity Strategy Action Plan** | This sets out to achieve a workplace that is harassment-free, inclusive and respectful, linking tasks, resources, and timelines with performance measures.
Status: Existing
- 6.6 **"Policing Persons in Crisis" Military Police Training & Protocols for dealing with Persons in Mental Crisis (including suicidality)** | Provides Military Police with the tools to deal effectively with persons experiencing mental health crisis (including suicidality).
Status: Existing
- 6.7 **Integrated Complaint & Conflict Management** | This will transform, streamline, and improve the CAF Complaint Resolution System.
Status: Enhancing

Line of Effort 7: Continuously Improve Through Research, Analysis and Incorporation of Lessons Learned and Best Practices

- 7.1 **Explore Potential of Enhanced Screening for Mental Health Risks prior to Enrolment** | A multi-disciplinary team will examine the possibility of incorporating enhanced selection to identify applicants with pre-existing mental health conditions by developing enhanced questionnaires; reviewing applicants’ provincial medical billing records; enhanced physical exam; and drug testing at the Canadian Forces Recruiting Centres. [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 6: “Review best practices for screening for mental disorders and suicidal behaviour during recruitment, and pre-deployment”].
Status: Enhancing Target date: 2018-19
- 7.2 **Research Project: Enhance / Optimize CAF Member Resilience through Selection and Training Processes to Operational Functional Point** | Review best screening practices for mental disorders and suicidal behaviours during recruitment, and pre-deployment. Examine international best practices for identifying risk and building resilience during the early recruitment and training phases. Identify mental and physical resilience markers to aid in optimal selection practices of resilient CAF members.
Status: Proposed
- 7.3 **Research Project: Developing CAF Member's Resilience during Post OFF Training** | Review best practices in building resilient CAF personnel in both domestic and international contexts with consideration to mental, physical and spiritual health.
Status: Proposed
- 7.4 **Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Research** | Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Research is required to fully understand suicidality and its impact on CAF members and veterans. Provided on request or in response to annual research call letter.
Status: Proposed
- 7.5 **Evaluate the effectiveness of the CAF / VAC Transition Model Project** | Evaluate the effectiveness of the CAF / VAC Transition Model Project by establishing metrics, tracking and analyzing them

- to ensure that CAF / VAC transition administrative and case management processes are streamlined, and become more efficient in serving the needs of CAF members who are in transition to post-military life.
Status: Proposed Target Date: 2018
- 7.6 **Consider Implementing psychosocial protocols such as "Caring Contacts" following a mental health crisis** | This is intended to assess the benefits of an emerging suicide-specific intervention. [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 5: "Consider implementing the Caring Contacts protocol following mental health crisis"].
Status: Proposed Target date: 2018
- 7.7 **Leverage Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and General Safety Officers (GSOs) to Support the SP Program** | There may be opportunities to train OHS and GSO personnel in suicide intervention techniques as another source of support to personnel dispersed across the organization.
Status: Proposed Target date: Spring 2019
- 7.8 **Resilience Coaching** | Resilience Coaching is being considered to provide help to students on training within the Canadian Army. Resilience coaches would work with students to build, practice, and employ skills and behaviors needed to manage the actual demands and stressors of Army training and operations.
Status: Proposed Target date: December 2018
- 7.9 **Employ a Suicidologist** | This expert in suicidology would advise the Director of Mental Health on best practices, policy and other matters, and would serve as a consultant to CAF clinicians across the country. [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 1: "Create the position of a CAF Suicide Prevention Quality Improvement Coordinator"].
Status: Proposed Target date: 2018
- 7.10 **Employ an Addictionologist** | This expert in addiction medicine would advise the Director of Mental Health on best practices, policy and other matters, and would serve as a consultant to CAF clinicians across the country. [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 1: "Create the position of a CAF Suicide Prevention Quality Improvement Coordinator"].
Status: Proposed Target date: 2018
- 7.11 **Conduct Research on Army Morale Project Leadership Training** | This is training to ensure it builds leader skills and knowledge effective in improving resiliency among personnel, thereby contributing to individual and group morale.
Status: In Development Target date: Fall 2018
- 7.12 **Research Project: Resilience in the CANSOF Community** | This research project will provide insight into psychological resilience in the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community, including determination of the attributes that are most important for success in the SOF environment.
Status: In Development Target date: Fiscal Year 2017-18
- 7.13 **Annual Progress Review** | Review CAF Suicide Prevention Action Plan on an annual basis to determine progress, impact, and success in implementing action items.
Status: Enhancing Target date: Annual
- 7.14 **Conduct a Needs Assessment for Suicide-specific (psychosocial) Interventions** | Exploration of emerging suicide-specific interventions [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 4: "Conduct a needs assessment for suicide-specific psychosocial interventions"].
Status: Enhancing
- 7.15 **Apply VAC Research to Inform CAF Policy and Procedures** | Examination of suicidality research, including longitudinal VAC studies and annual VAC technical reports, will highlight problem areas where interventions or changes may be required and should be monitored.
Status: Enhancing
- 7.16 **Medical Professional Technical Suicide Reviews (MPTSR)** | Initiated in 2010, this is an investigative quality assurance research process that provides opportunities to learn from individual suicides, identify trends, risks and areas for potential improvement.
Status: Existing
- 7.17 **Conduct a Systematic, Multi-Disciplinary Review of CAF Member Suicides since 2010** | Examine aggregate data over this seven year period. [Note: this action responds to 2016 Expert Panel recommendation 2: "Conduct a systematic review of CAF member suicides since 2010"].
Status: Existing

7.18 **Human Dimensions in Operations Research** | Examines factors that can affect the well-being and performance of CAF members on operations, such as leadership, morale, psychological distress, and environmental conditions.

Status: Existing

7.19 **Research: Operation HONOUR – affecting harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour (HISB)** | Research is required on issues surrounding victim support, culture change, social media, leadership issues, bystander effect, and the effectiveness of Operation HONOUR in eliminating HISB.

Status: Existing

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY ACTIONS

The following is a complete list of the current Veterans Affairs Canada actions planned and underway under the Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy. These draw from many program areas offering, for example, financial support, physical rehabilitation, or resources for family members. Some actions described here are major programs or new projects, and others are enhancements to existing programs or procedures. All are unified in addressing the seven Lines of Effort defined by this Strategy.

Actions are organized by Line of Effort. Where relevant, status information and projected completion dates for projects are provided.

Line of Effort 1: Communicating, Engaging & Educating

1.1 **Consult Mental Health Advisory Group** as required on the subject of VAC's mental health approach, initiatives, etc. to maximize Veteran-centric suicide prevention through optimal mental health promotion and care/treatment of mental illness. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 11.

Status: Current

1.2. **Ensure** that Veterans and Veteran family callers in distress, who contact their MPs and MLAs, are provided the necessary up-to-date information on VAC services and support. Develop and disseminate information package for MLAs and MPs to distribute to Veteran and Veteran family callers.

Status: In development Target date: December 2017

1.3 **Prevent Veteran suicides by engaging with Media** in order to promote the application of best practices on the subject of media reporting of suicides, thereby avoiding contagion effect (collaboration with CAF). Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 10.

Status: In development Target date: December 2018

1.4 **Render all information on VAC services and supports easily accessible** and comprehensible for releasing CAF members, Veterans and their families by enhancing VAC's website and VAC's social media presence.

Status: In development Target date: Fall 2017

1.5 **Ensure that Veterans** who have experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military are adequately informed of VAC services and supports available to them and how to access these.

Status: Current

1.6 **Develop a Postvention Protocol** that offers optimal support to Veteran family members, friends, care providers and other affected people after a completed suicide.

Status: In development Target date: April 2018

Line of Effort 2: Building & Supporting Resilient CAF Members & Veterans

2.1 **Explore expanding the Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative** (shown to be successful in Nova Scotia) to other provinces and territories to provide alternatives for Veterans with mental health problems and who face legal issues. The initiative focuses on corrective actions as opposed to punishment by providing access to needed services, treatments and supports.

Status: In development Target date: Winter 2018

2.2 **Enable Veterans Affairs Canada to address unique and urgent Veteran and Veteran family well-being needs** on a case by case basis through the establishment of a Veteran Emergency Fund.

Announced in Budget 2017 Target date: April 2018

2.3 **Increase understanding of the needs of vulnerable Veterans** (the homeless, in crisis, those experiencing difficulties with the law or incarcerated, etc.) and assist with their successful integration into their communities through continued implementation of the Veterans in Crisis Action Plan.

Status: In development Target date: Ongoing

Line of Effort 3: Connecting & Strengthening CAF Members & Veterans through Families and Community

- 3.1 **Support informal caregivers of Veterans** with physical and mental health conditions by launching the Online Caregiver Training Program.
Status: In development Target date: Fall 2017
- 3.2 **Address the vocational assistance needs of survivors**, which can include support for physical and mental health conditions, by removing time limit to apply. Announced in Budget 2017.
Status: In development Target date: April 2018 and beyond
- 3.3 **Support Veterans in achieving their education and future post-military employment goals**, and position them to be more competitive in the workforce, by creating and implementing the new Veterans' Education and Training Benefit. Announced in Budget 2017.
Status: In development Target date: April 2018 and beyond
- 3.4 **Provide evidence-based interventions to Veterans and their families** following mental health crises, including suicide attempts, by developing a VAC "Caring Contacts Protocol". Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 5.
Status: In development Target date: April 2019
- 3.5 **Promote a whole-of-community response** to suicide prevention in Veterans by implementing a Community Collaboration Outreach Initiative to strengthen relationships with the provinces, federal departments, Veterans associations, community organizations and other stakeholders. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 3.
Status: In development Target date: March 2019
- 3.6 **Promote community support and appreciation** for the achievements of Veterans by continuing to identify ways to honour and remember those who served in Canada's military.
Status: Current
- 3.7 **Help Veterans to achieve a successful post-military life and identity** by fostering meaningful connections between Canadians, notably youth, and today's Veterans through outreach and shared experiences.
Status: Current

- 3.8 **Help Veterans achieve a positive Veteran identity post-service**, and facilitate access to well-being supports across the life course as needed, by introducing a Veteran Identity Card with a 5 year renewal period. Sub-project of the Seamless Transition Task Force.
Status: In development Target date: Fall 2018

Line of Effort 4: Providing Timely Access to Effective Health Care & Support

- 4.1 **Facilitate Veterans' timely access to treatment and supports** for a service-related physical and mental health condition by continuing to identify ways to streamline the VAC adjudication decision-making model for physical and mental health disabilities.
Status: Current
- 4.2 **Increase Veterans' access to specialized mental health care**, treatment and support close to where they live by continuing to expand VAC-funded Network of Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinics.
Status: Ongoing
- 4.3 **Provide focused one-on-one support for higher-need Veterans** with physical or mental health conditions, including those who need access to treatment for suicidality, by reducing Case Manager case load to an average of 25:1.
Status: In development Target date: April 2018
- 4.4 **Provide family, caregivers, advocates and others with skills and knowledge** to intervene when a Veteran is in crisis and/or suicidal by continuing roll-out of the Veteran-specific Mental Health First Aid Training.
Status: In development Target date: March 2020
- 4.5 **Collaborate with Crisis Services Canada** to ensure that all Veterans and their families are familiar with the Canada Suicide Prevention Service (CSPS), a national crisis line, providing 24/7 crisis intervention support, in both Official Languages, using phone, text and chat technologies, to all Canadians, regardless of where they live.
Status: In development Target date: Late 2017
- 4.6 **Provide comprehensive Veteran support** by facilitating easy viewing of the client's current status across all domains of well-being via the development of a system portal for the National Contact

Centre Network (NCCN) which interfaces with the Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN).

Status: In development Target date: March 2019

- 4.7 **Promote optimal Veteran suicide risk assessment and safety planning** by reviewing the effectiveness of the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program in ensuring VAC field staff competency and confidence in the domain of suicide prevention. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 3.

Status: In development Target date: September 2019

- 4.8 **Promote optimal evidence-based suicide prevention** by reviewing the evidence for suicide-specific psychotherapies/interventions. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 4.

Status: In development Target date: April 2019

- 4.9 **Provide Veterans with access to new technologies** for mental health service delivery. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 9.

Status: In development Target date: April 2019

Line of Effort 5: Promoting Well-being of CAF Members through their Transition to Civilian Life

- 5.1 **Inform serving Members and their families earlier** in their career about the importance of transition planning and about VAC benefits, services and supports.

Status: In development Target date: April 2019

- 5.2 **Make all information on VAC services and supports easily accessible and understandable** for releasing CAF members, Veterans and their families, in order to increase engagement of members transitioning to post-military life and their families with needed well-being supports. Sub-project of the Seamless Transition Task Force.

Status: Current

- 5.3 **Facilitate the CAF member's successful transition from military to post-military life** by developing an online visual informational source of CAF and VAC services and supports. Sub-project of the Seamless Transition Task Force.

Status: In development Target date: Fall 2017

- 5.4 **Collaborate to explore ways of systematically registering new CAF recruits for a My VAC Account after** basic training, to promote CAF member familiarity with the online tool and its use to access VAC benefits, services and/or information at any point during a member's career.

Status: Current

- 5.5 **Promote civilian employment readiness**, recruitment of Veterans by civilian employers post-release and synergy amongst the Veteran employment community by finalizing and implementing the Joint CAF/VAC Employment Strategy domain. Announced in Budget 2017.

Status: In development Target date: Fall 2017 for Strategy approval

- 5.6 **Provide members with a better understanding** of how their skills and experience can help them find meaningful post-military employment by redesigning Career Transition Services.

Status: In development Target date: April 2018

- 5.7 **Prepare CAF members for their transition to civilian life** by making improvements to the Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN) seminars and promoting attendance.

Status: In development Target date: April 2019

- 5.8 **Develop an orientation process for CAF members** at each posting, which will include an introduction to Integrated Personnel Service Centre Transition Teams.

Status: In development Target date: April 2019

- 5.9 **Encourage innovation and research** related to issues Veterans and their families are facing during transition from military to civilian life by raising awareness with organizations of the new Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund.

Status: In development Target date: Winter 2017

- 5.10 **Provide medically releasing Veterans** and their families, access to the Military Family Support Program (all Military Family Resource Centres and online family supports) to optimize the well-being of military families. Announced in Budget 2017.

Status: In development Target date: April 2018

- 5.11 **Provide peer support** during the transition to post-military life by continuing to conduct Support (OSISS) outreach activities.

Status: Current

- 5.12 **Ensure continuity of health services** during the vulnerable military to civilian transition period by removing need for Veterans to re-apply with VAC for treatment benefits already approved by CAF when still-serving. Achieve this by aligning VAC/CAF medication formularies and treatment benefits for physical and mental health conditions.
Status: In development Target date: April 2019
- 5.13 **Ensure uniform and continuous case management provision** by applying standardized CAF/VAC case management support to all ill and injured CAF members (as per the Integrated Case Management Practice Model) through all stages of recovery, rehabilitation, and transition into civilian life.
Status: In development Target date: Phase 1 April 2018, Phase 2 April 2019
- 5.14 **Promote the Veteran's successful transition** to post-military life by establishing Transition Centres with integrated CAF and VAC resources
Status: In development Target date: April 2019
- 5.15 **Conduct effective and timely screening** by updating the VAC Transition Interview and ensuring that all releasing CAF members participate. Explore options for enhancing family member participation in the Transition Interview. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 6.
Status: In development Target date: April 2018
- 5.16 **Facilitate timely Veteran and Veteran family access to needed well-being supports** during the transition period by creating a business process for, and disseminating a newly-developed Transition Checklist (a self-assessment tool for identifying the Veteran's need for assistance).
Status: In development Target date: December 2017
- 5.17 **Facilitate timely Veteran and Veteran family access to needed well-being supports** during the transition to post-military life by also introducing Veteran Service Agent check-in calls to releasing members 30 days prior to release as a follow-up to the Transition Interview.
Status: In development Target date: April 2019
- 5.18 **Provide releasing CAF members and Veterans with assistance** navigating and putting in place the necessary supports for a successful transition to post-military life by rolling out the Guided Support Initiative at the national level, following the pilot study.
Status: In development Target date: April 2019
- 5.19 **Reduce administrative burden for Veterans** by continuing to develop end-to-end online benefit applications and approvals, online tracking of review and appeal decisions and correspondence for VAC programs, and fostering of CAF member applications prior to the vulnerable transition period.
Status: In development Target date: April 2019
- 5.20 **Streamline VAC/CAF administrative processes** and enhance case management during the transition period by implementing the CAF/VAC Transition Model Project Plan, thereby ensuring that releasing CAF members and their families have timely access to needed well-being supports. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 7.
Status: In development Target date: Fall 2017
- 5.21 **Review and disseminate the VAC Research Directorate Technical Report** on Veterans' Identities and Well-Being in Transition to Civilian Life. Utilize results to inform policy, program development and service providers.
Status: In development Target date: December 2019
- 5.22 **Determine impact of medical release** on Veterans and Veteran families, by identifying subject as a priority area of research focus for the Centre of Excellence on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and related mental health conditions, once the latter is established.
Status: In development Target date: December 2019
- 5.23 **Measure the effectiveness CAF/VAC Transition Model Project** in streamlining VAC/CAF administrative processes and in enhancing case management during the transition to post-military life.
Status: In development Target date: Before end of FY 2017-18

Line of Effort 6: Aligning Protocols, Policies, and Processes to Better Manage Risk & Stress

- 6.1 **Ensure quality assurance** in suicide prevention within VAC by exploring the feasibility of establishing a National VAC Suicide Prevention Coordinator role. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 1.
Status: In development Target date: April 2018
- 6.2 Decrease risk for suicide by developing and implementing a VAC business process to attempt to reduce/limit access to lethal means.
Status: In development Target date: March 2018

- 6.3 Support Veteran caregivers by implementing a new VAC Family Caregiver Relief Benefit.

Status: In development Target date: April 2018

Line of Effort 7: Continuously Improve Through Research, Analysis and Incorporation of Lessons Learned and Best Practices

- 7.1 **Promote optimal mental health services** and supports for Veterans by developing and implementing performance measures to assess the effectiveness of VAC's Mental Health Strategy. Apply lessons learned.

Status: In development Target date: April 2018

- 7.2 **Obtain increased knowledge** of Canadian Veteran-specific effective mental health treatments by establishing a Centre of Excellence on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Related Mental Health Conditions. Announced in Budget 2017.

Status: In development Target date: April 2019

- 7.3 **Determine suicide rates, factors associated with suicides and trends** in suicide rates among Canadian Veterans by continuing data linkage study collaboration with DND and Statistics Canada and providing annual updates.

Status: In development Target date: December 2017 and ongoing

- 7.4 **Increase knowledge of suicide in Canadian Veterans** by establishing a business process and protocol for periodic (every 3 to 5 years) suicide-related file review of an anonymous aggregate number of VAC Veteran client files. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 2.

Status: In development Target date: April 2018

- 7.5 **Establish the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund** to conduct research, and develop or implement innovative programs, services and supports, specifically tailored to improving the lives of Canada's Veterans and their families. The fund will facilitate opportunities to develop and assess

innovative well-being supports that could help to prevent suicides (also referenced in 5.9).

Status: In development Target date: April 2018

- 7.6 **Ensure quality improvement** in VAC services by continuing to survey Veterans.

Status: In development Target date: April 2018 and ongoing

- 7.7 **Promote availability and provision of the latest evidence-based treatments** for Veterans with a mental health condition by establishing a VAC Mental Health Treatment Standardization Committee to evaluate the evidence for treatments/interventions and supportive practices for mental health conditions from which Veterans commonly suffer. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 8

Status: In development Target date: December 2017

- 7.8 **Facilitate the Veteran's access to integrated treatment** for substance use and other mental health disorders when both are present. Aligns with Expert Panel Recommendation 8.

Status: In development Target date: December 2018

- 7.9 **Increase knowledge on the needs of Veteran families** by reviewing the results of the family well-being study (qualitative study of family members of Veterans with a mental health condition transitioning to civilian life) and determining next steps.

Status: In development Target date: January 2018

- 7.10 **Review and disseminate the results of the Road to Civilian Life (R2CL)** qualitative study on Veterans' identities and well-being, as well as the R2CL longitudinal qualitative study on the mental health and well-being of CAF members during military to civilian transition and determining next steps.

Status: Ongoing

- 7.11 **Increase scientific knowledge** of the role of service dogs in helping Veterans with a mental health condition by reviewing results of the study on the effect/ impact of psychiatric service dogs in assisting Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and determining next steps.

Status: In development Target date: December 2017 (Phase I), July 2018 (Phase II: study results)

