

Webinar

Organized by the Centre of Excellence - PTSD

Speakers:

Dr. Heidi Cramm
Dr. Denise DuBois

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Families matter: Exploring military and veteran family involvement in suicide prevention in Canada and abroad.

There is growing evidence-in research, practice, and policy-that members of military communities, including family members, are more likely to have suicidal thoughts, engage in suicidal behaviors, and die by suicide. Families play a critical role in suicide prevention. Dr. Heidi Cramm and Dr. Denise DuBois, from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, provided a brief overview of this research.

To (re)-see this webinar: <https://veteransmentalhealth.ca/about-us/events/families-matter/>

Suicide prevention follows a pathway of prevention, intervention and postvention. All these elements play an important role in suicide prevention.

- Prevention is about reducing risk and promoting mental well-being for all.
- Intervention is direct intervention to prevent suicide and reduce risk often in times of crisis.
- Postvention is about promoting recovery from suicide attempt or death and reducing risk in those closest to you including family members.

Importance of effectively mapping what is known about how and where families are included in suicide prevention discourse, research, and military organization policies. Approaching the work through the lens of the family allows for the identification of different ways in which families are included.

This project hopes to build a comprehensive perspective on suicide prevention and veteran and military families. This means looking at the topic from different angles: 1) academic research to build a solid foundation on how research includes families, 2) comparison of policies and programs in different countries (the 5 eyes, Israel, and Denmark).

>Implications: Unpacking how families are included in military and veteran research, policies, and programs is complex. In this research, families were included primarily because they are a risk or protective variable in the suicidality of the service member or veteran or because they assume the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders to prevent suicidality. In both cases, the family is included in a way that is oriented toward the service member or veteran. The third way in which families experience impacts that increase their own suicidality suggests that families are important in a way that may not have been fully explored.

For families to take on the roles and responsibilities of suicide prevention, they need:

- 1) support
- 2) training, and
- 3) appropriate resources (their own needs must be met)

Suicide prevention efforts must meaningfully include, consider, and address the unique needs of families in addition to military personnel to achieve more inclusive research, policies, and practices.