

INTRODUCTION TO REFERENCE GROUPS AND ADVISORY COUNCIL

ABOUT THE ATLAS INSTITUTE

The **Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families** (The Atlas Institute) builds strong community networks to create a system of the best possible supports and services for Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Veterans and their Families. We bring people together, collect what we know related to mental health conditions and how to treat them. We share that information widely and ensure our collective knowledge is reflected in the research and practical work we do as a network. As an independent intermediary organization, we prioritize the development of our central network, starting with the establishment of an advisory council for the Atlas Institute and four inter-related reference groups that provide lived expertise and knowledge.

REFERENCE GROUPS

The work of the Atlas Institute is guided by four separate but inter-related reference groups that focus on the perspectives of Veterans, Veteran Family members, researchers and service providers. These reference groups, made up of volunteers, provide strategic advice and expertise on specific initiatives and priority areas, as well as serving as champions for the Atlas Institute at external events.

The reference groups operate under the authority of the Atlas Institute's executive leadership team and have an advisory function only. The reference groups make recommendations to the Atlas Institute's advisory council, but decision-making remains the responsibility of the Atlas Institute's executive leadership team.

The purpose of the references groups are to:

- Offer diverse forms of expertise and/or experience in Veteran mental health promotion, research, practice and policy together to support the betterment of the mental health and well-being of Veterans and Veteran Family members

- Guide the work of the Atlas Institute by creating infrastructure for input, feedback and strategic advice from a multidisciplinary and diverse group
- Hold dedicated space for evidence-based knowledge exchange related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related conditions
- Encourage and support cross-sector collaborations related to Veteran PTSD and mental health
- Expand the reach and presence of the Atlas Institute by acting as champions for the organization, its mission and mandate across Canada

Each reference group consists of eight to 16 volunteer members. These include the voices of those with lived and living experience with mental health conditions and/or trauma; First Nations, Inuit and Métis representation; sexual and gender diversity; persons with disabilities; ethno-cultural and racialized diversity; and Francophone Canadians. Each reference group has a dedicated external Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as an internal Co-Chair (i.e. Atlas Institute staff member). These three Chair positions are responsible for bringing recommendations and advice from the reference groups to the Atlas Institute’s organization-wide advisory council, including but not limited to insight and expertise; best and promising practices related to Veteran mental health; and new project ideas or input on emerging and ongoing projects at the Atlas Institute.



Veteran Reference Group

The Veteran Reference Group is comprised of Regular and Reserve, full and part-time, retired or former service members who represent a diversity of ranks and experiences. This reference group provides a formal opportunity for Veterans – as our primary stakeholder group – to shape and provide input into the work of the Atlas Institute. In the vein of “nothing about us, without us,” the Veteran perspective is embedded within each reference group.



Veteran Family Member Reference Group

Family members play a central role in the daily care, support and decision-making related to the mental health of their Veteran Family member. The Veteran Family Member Reference Group comprises of those whom the Veteran identifies as Family, either biologically, legally or emotionally, such as parents, siblings, partners/spouses, and dependent and adult children, as well as carers (related or not), friends and peers.



Service Provider Reference Group

The Service Provider Reference Group includes professionals from across the continuum of care, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, peer supporters, social workers and vocational trainers. Clinicians in this reference group have experience and expertise treating PTSD, moral injury, sanctuary trauma, military sexual trauma and other forms of trauma.



Researcher Reference Group

The Researcher Reference Group includes the perspectives of early- or mid-career researchers, or subject matter experts who have expertise in a broad array of mental health conditions that affect military, Veterans and Veteran Families. Members will have expertise in topics including PTSD and its subtypes, trauma (including combat stress, military sexual trauma and moral injury), depression and substance use.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The role of the advisory council is to provide the Atlas Institute with strategic advice and expertise on specific initiatives and priority areas. As the name suggests, the advisory council was created to advise the Atlas Institute by bringing forth ideas, recommendations, feedback and concerns from the four reference groups. The advisory council is comprised of the Chairs, Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each reference group, as well as Atlas Institute's President and CEO, and members of the Atlas Institute's executive leadership team.

If you are interested in learning more about the reference groups, or want information about other ways to contribute to the work we do at the Atlas Institute, check out the [Get Involved Webpage](#).

Stay connected



Online:
atlasveterans.ca



Twitter:
[@atlasveteransca](https://twitter.com/atlasveteransca)



Facebook:
[@atlasveteransca](https://www.facebook.com/atlasveteransca)



LinkedIn:
[linkedin.com/company/atlasveteransca](https://www.linkedin.com/company/atlasveteransca)

The work of the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families is made possible thanks to funding from Veterans Affairs Canada.

Disclaimer: Views and opinions expressed are solely those of the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families and may not reflect the views and opinions of the Government of Canada.



atlasveterans.ca