

# FAMILIES MATTER: EXPLORING MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN SUICIDE PREVENTION IN CANADA AND ABROAD

November 24, 2021 | 1:00-3:00pm ET

## Summary

On November 24, 2021, the Centre of Excellence on PTSD co-hosted a webinar in collaboration with Dr. Heidi Cramm and Dr. Denise DuBois of Queen's University. Through two presentations and a panel discussion, the webinar aimed to:

- 1 → Increase understanding of how Families are included or reflected in suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention activities across multiple jurisdictions,
- 2 → Share knowledge from relevant research findings, and
- 3 → Bring together a variety of community perspectives to chart next steps.

## Registrants and Attendees



206  
registrants



47%  
of registrants  
attended the live  
event



97% English  
speakers

3% French  
speakers

# Speakers

The event featured two presentations and a panel discussion by community leaders, researchers and those affected by suicidality.



**Fardous Hosseiny**  
Moderator



**Dr. Heidi Cramm**  
Presenter and Moderator



**Philip Ralph**  
Presenter



**Dr. Denise DuBois**  
Presenter



**Bonnie Rushowick**  
Panelist



**Chad Bridger**  
Panelist



**Jim Short**  
Panelist



**Sheri Lerat**  
Panelist



**Dr. J. Don Richardson**  
Panel Moderator

## Event Key Messages

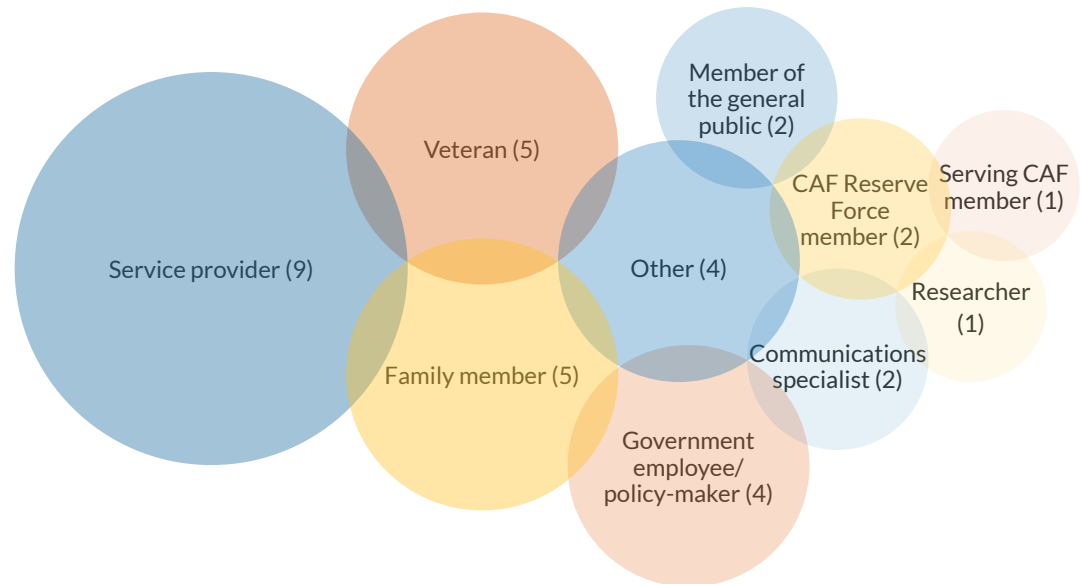
- 1 → **Due to the nature of military service, the definition of “Family” should not be strictly limited to parents, siblings, or children.** This definition should also include peers and close friends. A wider definition is important for guiding future work related to Families.
- 2 → **Suicide has serious and lasting impacts on Family members.** These impacts can be physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational.
- 3 → **The needs of Families are often overlooked or forgotten** in research, policy, and practice related to suicide prevention as well as within the wider military institution. All need to be more “Family-engaging.”
- 4 → **Family members can be a crucial source of support for their loved ones, but they often need support, too.** Families matter in their own right.
- 5 → **Families need appropriate supports, training, and resources across the suicide prevention pathway, from prevention to postvention.** Central to this need is education to help Family members navigate issues related to mental health and suicide.
- 6 → **Peer support is an invaluable form of support.** It allows people to connect with and learn from others who have walked a similar path.
- 7 → **In Canada, there are various programs available to provide support to Families affected by suicide.** Every person has different support needs and preferences. Some highlighted programs include [Camp FACES](#), [Wounded Warriors Canada Surviving Spouses Program](#), and [HOPE Bereavement Program](#).
- 8 → **Moving forward, co-design should be the rule rather than the exception.** Families need to be meaningfully involved in the development of suicide prevention programs and policies.
- 9 → **Normalize talking about mental health and suicide in a safe and responsible way within military and Veteran communities.** Stigma remains a serious issue, leading many to suffer in silence. This needs to change.
- 10 → **Like most paradigm shifts, greater involvement and consideration of Family needs will take time.** That said, efforts are moving in the right direction.

## What We Heard

This section briefly summarizes feedback received through our post-event survey. A total of 34 attendees responded to the survey. Partial responses were included where applicable.

### RESPONDENT PROFILE<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Multiple responses possible.



64%

Majority of respondents were between the ages of 45 and 64 years.



71%

Majority of respondents identified as women.



50%

Half of respondents were located in Ontario.

### KEY FEEDBACK

- 92% of respondents reported that the panel discussion was **interesting**.
- 92% of respondents reported that the webinar content was **easy to understand**.
- 96% of respondents reported that the content of the webinar was **relevant** to them.
- 77% of respondents reported that the event **improved their understanding** of the need for Family-inclusive military and Veteran suicide prevention efforts.
- 92% of respondents reported that they are **interested in learning more** about suicide prevention within military communities.

To learn more about the webinar and view materials shared with the audience, including the Fact Sheet on the research project, visit the [event page](#) on the Centre of Excellence on PTSD's website. The Fact Sheet provides a brief written overview of the research findings presented during the event. You can also visit the [project page](#).