



Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans



Presented by:
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Overview:

- Introduction to the Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans
- Our role regarding military sexual misconduct and military sexual trauma
- What we are hearing – Victims and Survivors of military sexual misconduct
- Changes to VAC policies and practices
- Key Takeaways

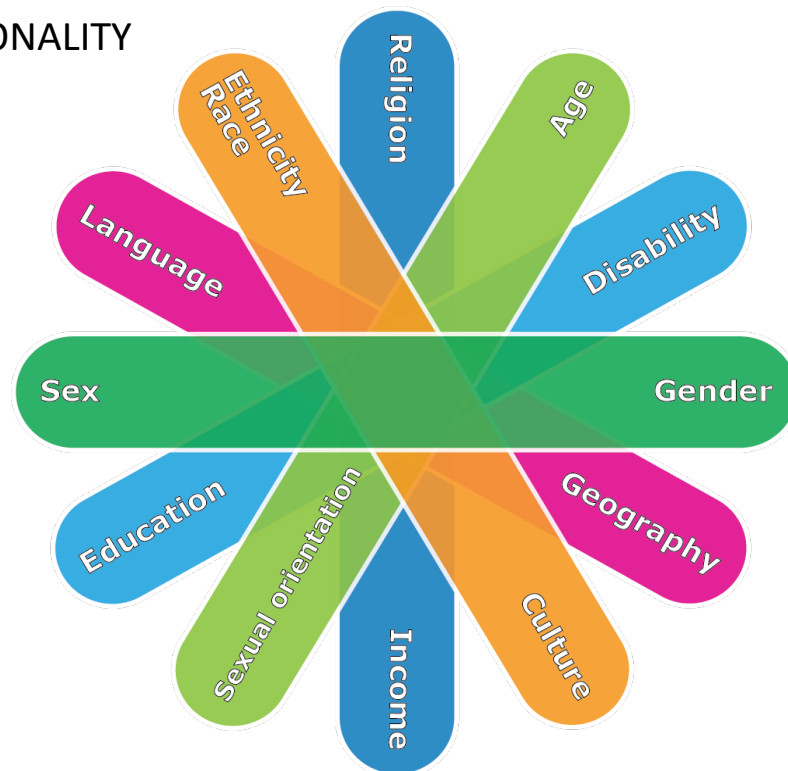


Introduction to the Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans

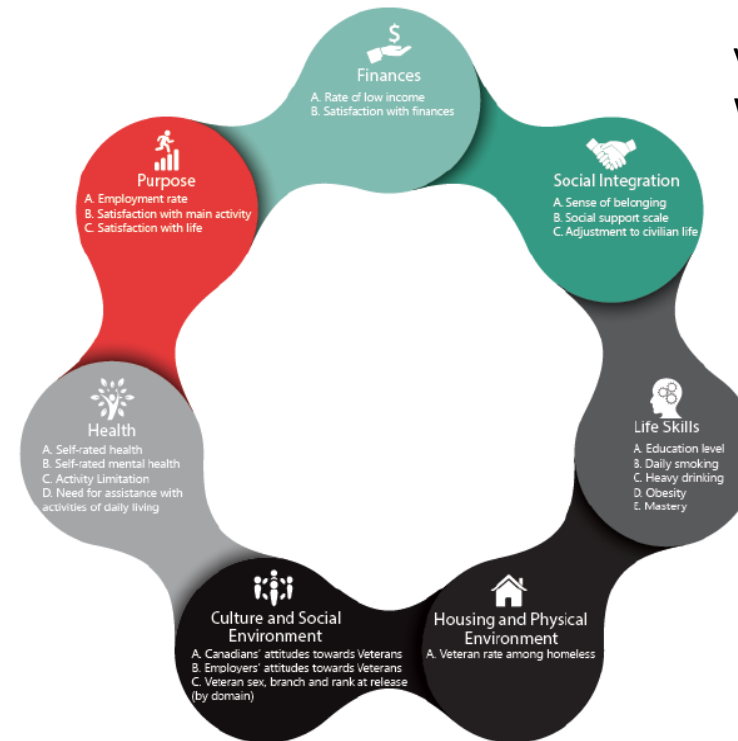
Mandate:

- Identify and work to address systemic barriers specific to women and gender diverse Veterans and their families, and
- Fulfill key federal government commitments to advance gender equality, diversity and inclusion for Veterans.

INTERSECTIONALITY
WHEEL



VETERANS
WELLBEING FRAMEWORK





Key Objectives:

1. Raising **awareness and respect** for diverse living and lived military experiences and accomplishments,
2. Understanding the **unique impacts** of military service on well-being,
3. Facilitating ongoing **consultation and collaboration** through multidisciplinary human-centric group engagements,
4. Identifying potential research, policy, program and/or service **gaps/barriers/challenges**,
5. Promoting a more collaborative **solution space**, and
6. Supporting sex and gender equality within VAC.

Participation in:

- Gender-based Violence Strategy and National Action Plan led by Women and Gender Equality Canada,
- First LGBTQ2 Federal Action Plan led by LGBTQ2 Secretariat under Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth at Heritage Canada,
- External Advisory Council, Sexual Misconduct Response Centre, Department of National Defence,
- Joint working group between CAF/Transition Group, SMRC and VAC to support survivors of sexual misconduct linked to their military service; particularly the Joint Peer Support initiative,
- Military Sexual Trauma Community of Practice, and
- Targeted engagement with Veteran Stakeholder Groups i.e. Women Veterans Forum, LGBTQ2 Veterans Roundtable events.

▼ What we are Hearing – Victims and Survivors of Military Sexual Misconduct ⁶

Potential Barriers:

- Identifying as a Veteran,
- Recognizing their symptoms and knowing where and how to seek the right supports and treatments,
- Lack of available programming and supports tailored to meet the unique needs of military sexual misconduct and military sexual trauma victims and survivors, i.e. peer support,
- Difficulty is getting a proper medical diagnosis (related to service),
- Competing commitments/priorities i.e. working/going to school, families/living alone, child care/dependent care, self-care, and now dealing with the added pressures of the pandemic, and
- Potential range of emotions and feelings of betrayal/anger, loss/grief, alone/isolated, stigma/guilt/shame...



Changes to VAC Policies and Practices

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- Three policy instruments were updated to better reflect the reality of sexual trauma (sexual harassment or assault):
 - [Disability Benefits in Respect of Wartime and Special Duty Service - The Insurance Principle](#)
 - [Disability Benefits in Respect of Peacetime Military Service - The Compensation Principle](#)
 - [Benefit of Doubt](#)
- VAC continues to conduct reviews and reconsiderations of past disability benefits decisions related to sexual trauma,
- Adjudication Manual was updated to reflect the realities of sexual assault and sexual harassment,
- Dedicated unit was created to facilitate the processing of VAC disability benefit claims related to the Class Action,
- Trauma-informed support training was provided to those adjudicating Disability Benefit claims, and
- Focus Stakeholder Group provided an opportunity for survivors of military sexual trauma to share directly with VAC Senior Management their experiences accessing VAC programs, services and benefits.



Key Takeaways

- Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans is committed to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion for Veterans.
- We have listened and heard members affected by military sexual misconduct repeat their truths of lived experiences and recognize the need for change.
- Minister of Veterans Affairs has been given a public mandate letter commitment to:
 - With the support of the Minister of National Defence, work to ensure that women, LGBTQ2, Indigenous, Black and racialized Veterans and Veterans with disabilities who are transitioning out of the Canadian Armed Forces receive support that meets their unique needs. This will include the use of disaggregated research and data to provide tailored programs and services to these Veterans.
- Budget 2021 announced funding to:
 - Pilot online and in-person peer support groups for Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans who experienced sexual misconduct during their service. These will be tailored to military experiences.
- VAC will continue to work in conjunction with DND/CAF, the SMRC and persons with lived experience to address the needs of Veterans in enhancing support services to victims and survivors as well as increasing the availability of resources for recovery.