

Atlas Institute expands suite of resources on military sexual trauma to Family members

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA, May 28, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Thousands of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members have been impacted by sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence — also known as military sexual misconduct — at some point during their careers. The effects can be lasting and profound, not only on the person impacted, but also their loved ones.

Widely known as military sexual trauma (MST), these impacts include the psychological, physical and social “wounds” that people may feel after experiencing or witnessing sexual misconduct during their service. For Family members, there are often additional challenges associated with supporting someone who has experienced MST, including the distress Family members themselves can feel knowing that their loved one has survived such a traumatic event.

Today, in recognition of May being Sexual Violence Prevention Month in Canada, the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families has released a set of resources that is the first of its kind to be specifically designed for Family members or loved ones of individuals impacted by MST. These new resources aim to build understanding about MST, provide Family members with tools both as supporters of people living with this trauma and to care for themselves as they learn about it and witness its impacts, and increase their capacity to offer support. This set of resources joins a wider suite of others previously developed by Atlas for individuals impacted by MST as well as for health care providers who might be providing care and support to those affected.

MaryAnn Notarianni, Deputy CEO and Executive Vice-President of Knowledge Mobilization at the Atlas Institute, says that the Veteran Family community has highlighted the critical need for a variety of tools and strategies to address the often invisible wounds of MST and foster support and healing after sexual trauma during service. “Family members and friends can be an important source of support in a person’s journey towards healing from MST, but they can also be impacted and need tools and resources to care for themselves, as well as for their loved one. However, what we have heard from members of the Veteran community is that that there is currently a lack of resources available to help Veteran Family members and friends understand and navigate the impacts of their loved one’s MST.”

Laryssa Lamrock, National Strategic Advisor for Veteran Families at the Atlas Institute, notes that Family members who learn that someone they care about has experienced sexual trauma may be looking for answers on how to navigate the situation, including what to say or ways to

respond and to meaningfully support themselves and their loved one.

“MST is such a complex issue — each person’s experience and healing journey can be influenced by many different factors. For Family members witnessing the impacts and trying to offer support, there can be added complexity around understanding the best path forward that takes into account their loved one’s needs, readiness and specific considerations related to military culture,” she says. “And while Family members and friends may not have directly experienced MST, they might be on the front line of support or deal with a range of emotions and feelings as a result, like isolation, anger, loneliness or shame. They may even show similar signs of trauma as their impacted loved one. As such, they need support and resources too.”

Notarianni adds that the team at Atlas recognized early into its mandate that MST was a priority requiring significant attention, including the development of resources for those impacted and for their Families.

“MST is a major public health concern for the Veteran community, with one in four women and one in 25 men reporting having experienced at least one sexual assault since joining the military,” she says. “When we began our work in 2021 of developing resources on MST, we started with information for Veterans and health care providers but the intention was always to address the Family perspective and fill a knowledge gap that’s been identified by Veterans, Veteran Family members and those who provide care to them.”

The new resources were co-created by the Atlas Institute in collaboration with a group of Veterans impacted by MST, Family members, service providers and other subject matter experts.

M.E. Samplonius, CD, an MST survivor and member of the advisory committees involved in co-creating both the new and the earlier resources, says she hopes the lived experience she shared as part of the resource development about what her own Family learned amid her MST injury will help others who are impacted.

“When my last military sexual assault occurred, my children were in their teens, so there was no hiding my trauma symptoms. It was difficult to think of how to approach talking about such a deeply profound and intimate injury. Having a resource available like this would have been so helpful and validating for us all as we tried to navigate Family life with MST,” she says. “Being involved in creating a resource that might help others understand the complex emotional toll MST can cause has been incredibly comforting. I hope these resources can help other Families survive the ordeal of MST and strengthen their healing journeys.”

Four new resources on MST for Family members are now available: a primer providing an overview on MST, two conversation guides to help Family members talk about MST with their impacted loved one or disclose it to others, including children, and a resource offering ideas on self-care and boundary-setting.

The resources are now available for download at atlasveterans.ca/mst-family.

-30-

For more information, please contact:
media-atlas@theroyal.ca

Quick facts:

- The Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families was established to provide easier access to information, research, tools and expertise on PTSD and related mental health conditions.
- Since its inception, Atlas has contributed to the publication of numerous peer-reviewed articles and created various knowledge products, including fact sheets, written resources, videos and infographics. Atlas has led or is currently leading dozens of research projects and has partnered on many others.
- Atlas actively engages Veterans and their Families as key partners, co-investigators and co-authors of its research, including a process for their participation in reviewing research outcomes from a lived expertise perspective.
- It also collaborates and partners with Veterans and Families to understand which issues matter most to them, using that knowledge to work with them and with service providers and researchers to co-create resources and knowledge products that fit the unique culture and needs of the Veteran and Family communities.

ABOUT THE ATLAS INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

The Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families works with Veterans, Families, service providers and researchers to bridge the divide between research and practice so Veterans and their Families can get the best possible mental health care and supports. The Atlas Institute was originally established as the Centre of Excellence on PTSD and Related Mental Health Conditions, through the Minister of Veterans Affairs' November 2015 mandate letter, with funding and budget announced in the March 2017 federal budget.

Joy Pavelich
Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families
+1 403-934-1694

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[X](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[YouTube](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/715048834>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.