

R.C.M.P. VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION MANITOBA DIVISION

A GUIDE FOR POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

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This Guide is divided into four components, those being an Introduction to PTSD, Awareness of the Symptoms of PTSD, Diagnosis and Treatment and finally Benefits Available. This Guide is intended to assist retired members, spouses and families to identify and access services offered by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and the Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinic.

Introduction To PTSD

What Is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

It is an anxiety disorder that some people get after seeing or living through one or a series of dangerous events. When in danger, it is natural to feel afraid. This fear triggers many split-second changes in the body to prepare to defend against the danger or to avoid it. This "fight-or-flight" response is a healthy reaction meant to protect a person from harm. In PTSD, this reaction is changed or damaged. People who have PTSD may feel stressed or frightened even when they are no longer in danger.

Who Gets PTSD?

Anyone can get PTSD at any age. This includes veterans and survivors of physical and sexual assault, abuse, accidents, disasters, investigations with disturbing facts and many other traumatic events. Not everyone with PTSD has been through a dangerous event. Some people experience PTSD after a friend or family member has been in danger or harmed.

Why Do Some People Get PTSD And Other People Do Not?

It is important to remember that not everyone who lives through a dangerous event gets PTSD. In fact, most will not experience the disorder. Many factors play a part in whether a person will experience PTSD. Some of these are risk factors that make a person more likely to get PTSD. Other factors, called resilience

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factors, can help reduce the risk of the disorder. Some of these risks and resilience factors are present before the trauma and others become important during and after a traumatic event.

Awareness Of The Symptoms Of PTSD

What Are The Symptoms Of PTSD?

PTSD can cause many types of symptoms. The symptoms can be generally grouped into three categories:

Re-Experiencing Symptoms:

Includes flashbacks where the trauma is relived over and over and includes physical symptoms such as elevated heart rate and perspiration, nightmares or frightening thoughts. Re-experiencing symptoms may cause problems in a person's everyday routine. They can start from the person's own thoughts and feelings or from outside words, objects or situations that trigger re-experiencing.

Avoidance Symptoms:

Includes staying away from places, events or objects that are reminders of the experience. Feeling emotionally numb. Experiencing feelings of strong guilt, depression or worry. Losing interest in activities that were enjoyable in the past. Having trouble remembering the dangerous event.

Things that remind a person of the traumatic event can trigger avoidance symptoms. These symptoms may cause a person to change his or her personal routine. For example, after a bad car accident, a person who usually drives may avoid doing so or riding in a vehicle.

Hyper-Arousal Symptoms:

Being easily startled, feeling tense or "on-edge" or having difficulty sleeping, and/or having angry outbursts.

Hyper-arousal symptoms are usually constant, instead of being triggered by things that remind one of the traumatic event(s). They can make the person feel continually stressed and angry, making it difficult to do daily tasks, such as sleeping, eating or concentrating.

It is natural to have some of these symptoms after a dangerous event. Sometimes people have very serious symptoms that go away after a few weeks. This is called acute stress disorder or ASD. When the symptoms last more than a few weeks and become an ongoing problem, it might be PTSD. Some people with PTSD do not show any symptoms for weeks or months.

Risk Factors For PTSD Include:

- > Living through dangerous events & traumas
- > Having a history of mental illness
- > Getting hurt
- > Seeing people hurt or killed
- > Feeling horror, helplessness or extreme fear
- > Having little or no social support after the event
- > Dealing with extra stress after the event, such as loss of a loved one, pain and injury, or loss of a job or home

Resilience Factors That May Reduce The Risk Of PTSD Include:

- > Seeking out support from other people, such as friends and family
- > Finding a support group after a traumatic event
- > Feeling good about one's own actions in the face of danger
- > Having a coping strategy or a way of getting through the bad event and learning from it
- > Being able to act and respond effectively despite feeling fear.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

How Is PTSD Detected?

A doctor who has experience helping people with mental illness, such as a psychiatrist or psychologist can diagnose PTSD. The diagnosis is made after the doctor talks with the person who has symptoms of PTSD.

To Be Diagnosed With PTSD

A person must have all of the following for at least one month:

- > At least one re-experiencing symptom
- > At least three avoidance symptoms
- > At least two hyper-arousal symptoms
- > Symptoms interfere with daily life, such a going to work, being with friends, taking care of important tasks.

If a decision is made by an RCMP veteran to seek treatment, contact can be made with the Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service at the following telephone numbers:

Manitoba Area Office Location: 610 - 234 Donald Street, Winnipeg, Mb. (6th Floor City Place Building)

Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service - 24-Hour Service: 1-800-268-7708

Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD): 1-800-567-5830

The telephone counselor(s) can answer any questions one may have concerning the VAC Assistance Service. If one wishes to meet a counselor, the name of one will be provided and they will make contact with you. The counselor will call

within 48 hours to set up an appointment. IMPORTANT: If in crisis call 1-800-268-7708.

At the initial meeting with the VAC Counselor, the discussion proceeds as follows:

- a) identification of the problem. Your problem will be clearly defined.
- b) using available resources, the Counselor will put you in contact with specialized services.
- c) follow-up services. Professional & resources will work to establish a personal action plan to help resolve the problem. This process and all matters discussed with the VAC Counselor are kept confidential. The cost of this program is paid for by Veterans Affairs Canada.

Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinic:

The OSI Clinic is an organization utilized for referrals by Veterans Affairs Canada and is a professional resource. The referral is not available to the general public and can only be made through and by VAC. The OSI Clinic services are frequently utilized when there is an application for disability benefits. The OSI Clinic is staffed with psychologists, psychotherapists and counselors and is a primary mental health support for RCMP experiencing mental health concerns stemming from service. The OSI Clinic also provides case management services to RCMP Veterans who need formal support identifying their concerns and ways to resolve these concerns.

Location & Contact Information: Deer Lodge Centre, 2109 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg Mb.

Clinic Reception - (204) 831-3420

BENEFITS

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) – Manitoba Area

VAC Manitoba area is responsible for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Northwestern Ontario. There are offices in Winnipeg, on the base at Camp Shilo and a case manager in the VAS Canada Brandon location. This office is connected with the Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinic situated at Deer Lodge Centre, Winnipeg, Mb. There is a primary VAC office in Regina, Saskatchewan and a staff member located in Saskatoon, Sask.

BENEFITS AT VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA:

Released RCMP & Still Serving Civilian Members are entitled to:

- >Disability Pensions
- >Treatment Benefits - "A" coverage for their pensioned condition
- >Case Management
- >Information & Referral
- >Treatment Allowance - in patient treatment is only related to their pensioned condition
- >Special Awards (AA, CA, EIA)
- >Medical travel & PME for their pensioned condition
- >Survivor Benefits - is at the same rate for one year & proportionate after one year
- >Transition Interview

Not Entitled To:

- >New Veterans Charter Services & Benefits
- >Outpatient Treatment Allowances
- >Veterans Independence Program
- >Nursing Home Intermediate Care
- >Long Term Care
- >Last Post Fund

Transition Interview:

This is a service offered to retiring and retired RCMP members and their families by Veterans Affairs Canada. This Transition Interview is voluntary and is considered an information screening process. An interview can be requested subsequent to their retirement from the RCMP at which time a Screening Interview will transpire. By contacting VAC the appropriate action will follow.

Topics Discussed During This Interview Process:

- >how does the Member feel about leaving?
- >how was their time and experience during their service?
- >marital and family problems (long absences from family, adjustments & readjustments at home, difficulty in relationship with spouse, children)
- >transitional problems as a result of a major change of life, career or incident (RCMP life to civilian and in many cases starting a new career drastically different)
- >emotional and psychological problems (PTSD is an example)
- >substance abuse
- >financial difficulties, trouble making ends meet
 - >some other types of personal problems discussed are legal difficulties, interpersonal conflicts
- >work related problems, organizational changes, stress, burnt-out, new responsibilities

Survivor Benefits:

When contacted by the survivor or family, VAC will arrange an interview with a VAC Counselor at which time facts will be accumulated and the matter then

adjudicated by Veterans Affairs Canada. The RCMP Member/Veteran's existing monthly disability benefit would probably carry on with the survivor for their lifetime. In other cases a survivor may qualify for a Benefit Allowance again through VAC. The benefits apply to the survivor, children under the age of 18years or children up to 25years of age while attending post secondary education. The availability of counseling and other types of support that would be of benefit to the surviving spouse/family can be accessed through contact with VAC. Posthumous applications for benefits are accepted and adjudicated by VAC. Upon making an application wait time is minimal and usually an interview with the VAC Counsellor is expedited.