OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

Last Updated - July 2025

RESEARCH HISTORY

The Veterans Transition Program (VTP) was first designed and delivered as a research project with the intention of investigating new methods of helping veterans of the Canadian Forces to reduce and cope with symptoms of operational stress injuries and transition more successfully into civilian life.

Since the development and delivery of the first VTP in 1997, numerous research papers and books have been published on our therapeutic model and its effects on Veterans who complete the program. The majority of these initial papers were authored by the program founders: Drs. Marv Westwood, David Kuhl and Tim Black. References to these publications and more can be found in the list of publications below.

From 2012-2018, a UBC Professor was contracted by the VTN to evaluate our transition program in line with the standards used by Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defense. The evaluation, led by Dr. Cox, demonstrated significant decreases in depression, PTSD, and drinking-related behaviours in VTN group participants from pre-group to post-group. These reductions were maintained at 3-month, 12-month and 18-month follow-up.

The challenges of COVID-19 resulted in the VTN restructuring its 10-day program into a new 5-day Level 1 Transition Skills Course (TSC) that could accommodate social-distancing. As COVID-19 receded, another 5-day Level 2 Therapeutic Enactment Course (TEC) was added. Together, these two 5-day programs include all the curriculum of the original 10-day VTP. An evaluation protocol was developed in collaboration with Dr. John Oliffe and the UBC Men's Health Network and data collected between June 2022- June 2024. Data from 283 program participants across 52 VTN programs demonstrated statistically significant decreases between scores on pre-group measures and at 3-month follow-up, with improvements in anger, depression, anxiety, PTSD, moral injury, loneliness and work and social functioning maintained 6 months later. We will be preparing the results from this data set for publication in the year ahead.

In the fall of 2024, we rolled out a streamlined program evaluation protocol for ease of use by our clinicians, peers, and participants. The measures and outcomes are presented below.

MEASURES USED

Each VTN course has a comprehensive package of measures administered immediately before, after and at 3 and 6 months afterward. Our program evaluation protocol assesses numerous constructs that have been linked with successful veteran transition. These metrics are focused on measuring treatment outcomes across our programming, including symptoms of psychological distress commonly experienced by veterans such as: PTSD, depression, moral injury, anger, suicidality, and anxiety.

VETERANS TRANSITION NETWORK

MEASURES ADMINISTERED IN THE VTN PROGRAM EVALUATION PACKAGE

Scale	Pre	Post	3 mo	6 mo
Cohesion to Group Scale		Y		
Dimensions of Anger Reactions-5 Scale	Y	Y	Y	Y
GAD-7 (Anxiety)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Military Sexual Trauma Screen	Y			Y
Military-Civilian Adjustment & Reintegration Measure (M-CARM)	Y		Y	Y
Moral Injury Symptom Scale-Military Version Short-Form	Y	Y	Y	Y
PHQ-9 (Depression)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Satisfaction with Treatment Scale		Y		
Short Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Self-Report Screen	Y	Y	Y	Y
Suicidal Ideation Rating	Y	Y	Y	Y
Therapeutic Enactment Inventory		Y		
Trauma History Screen	Y			
UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale	Y	Y	Y	Y
VTN Social Engagement Rating			Y	Y
Work and Social Adjustment Scale	Y	Y	Y	Y

DATA ANALYSES

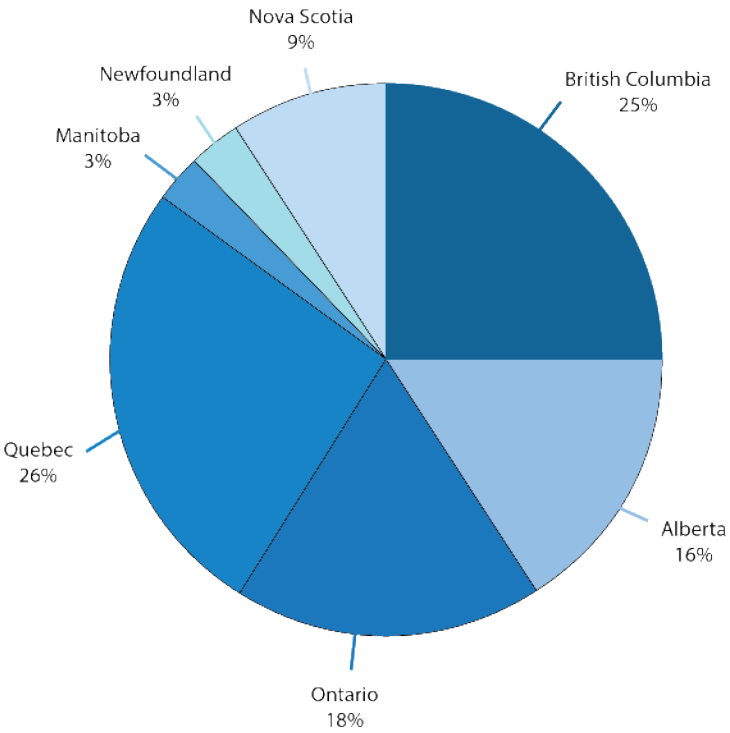
We tested group differences using t-tests on the above measures between pre-group, post-group and at 3- and 6-month follow-up.

The most recent data analysis performed in April 2025 included data from 158 program participants across 38 VTN programs between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025. Statistically significant decreases on key outcome variables were found between scores on pre and post group measures. These improvements in symptoms were maintained at 3 and 6-month follow-up.

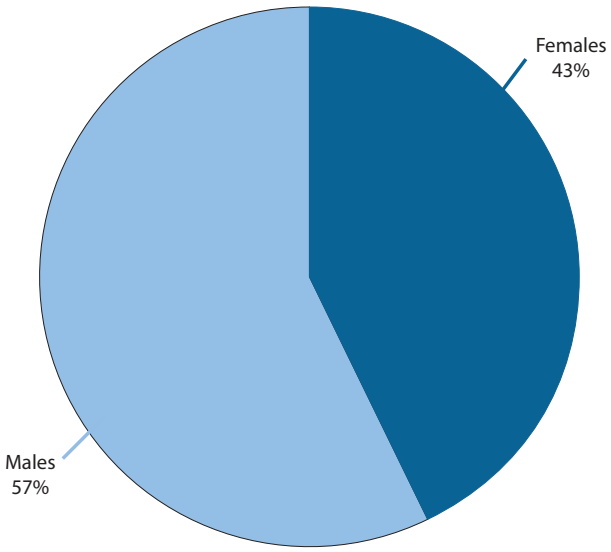
Below are some key outcomes of the data analysis. Data collection and analysis is ongoing and will be updated annually

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

GROUP DELIVERY BY PROVINCE

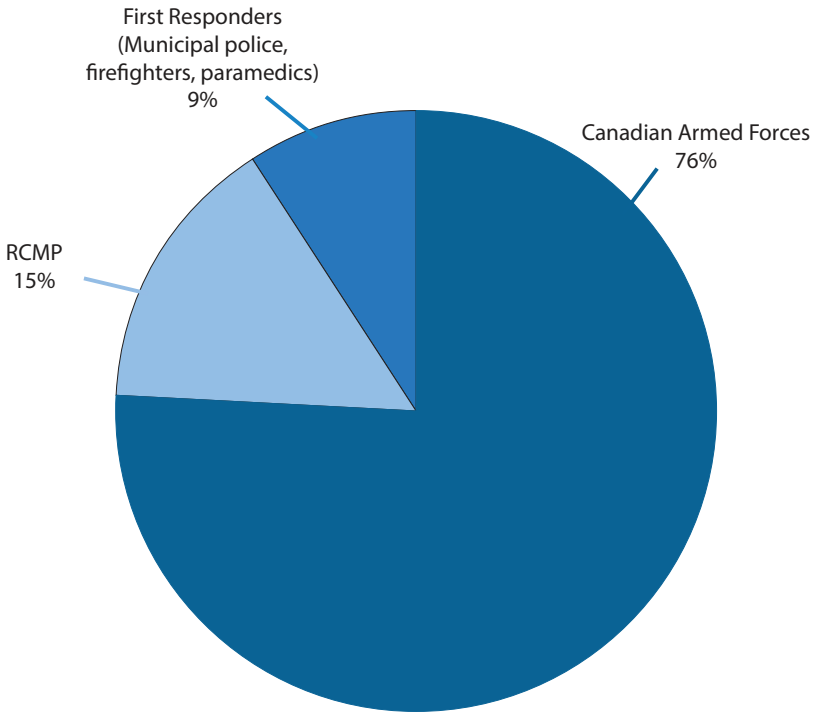


VTN GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER

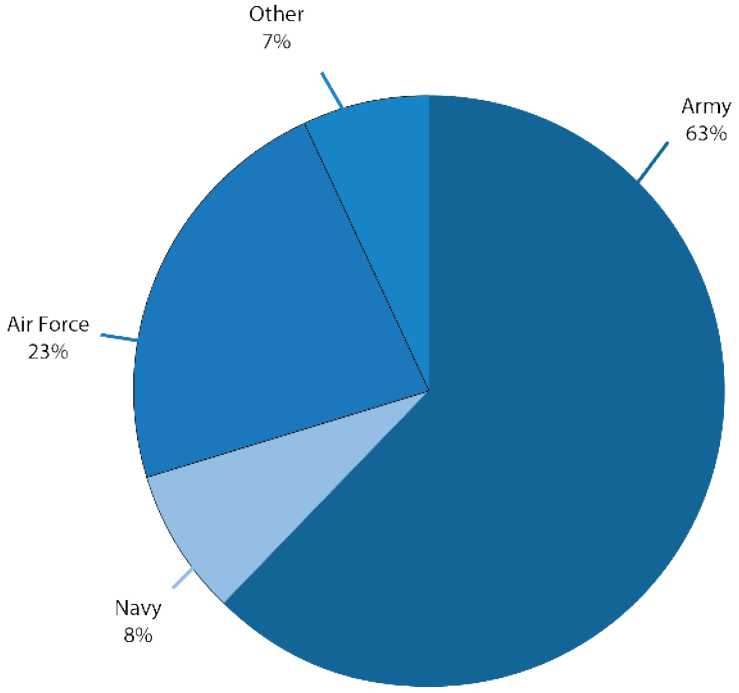


VETERANS TRANSITION NETWORK

TYPE OF SERVICE

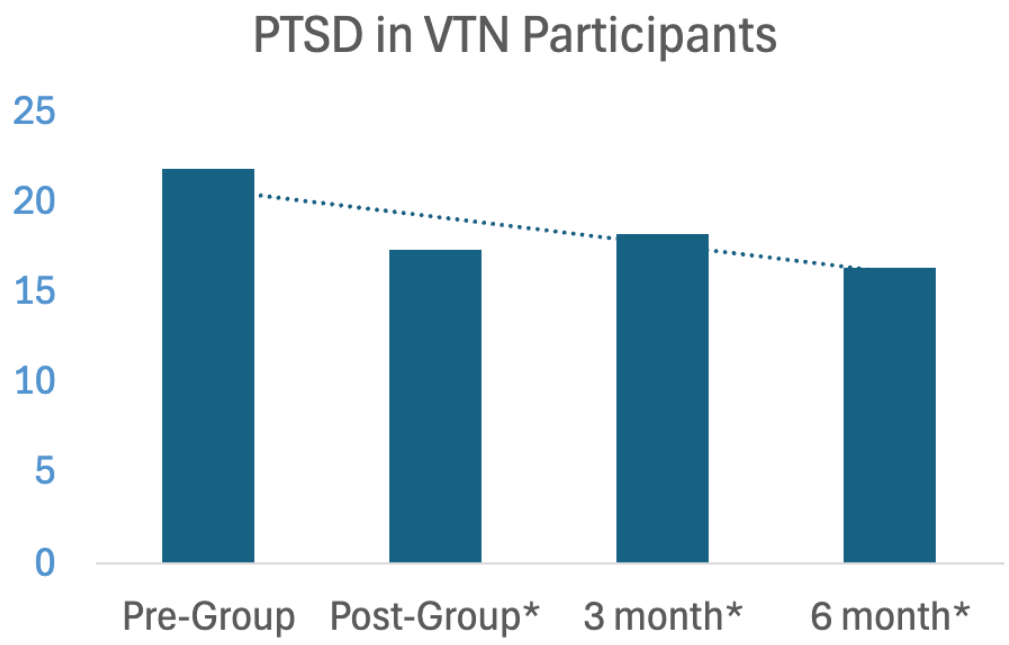


BRANCH OF SERVICE

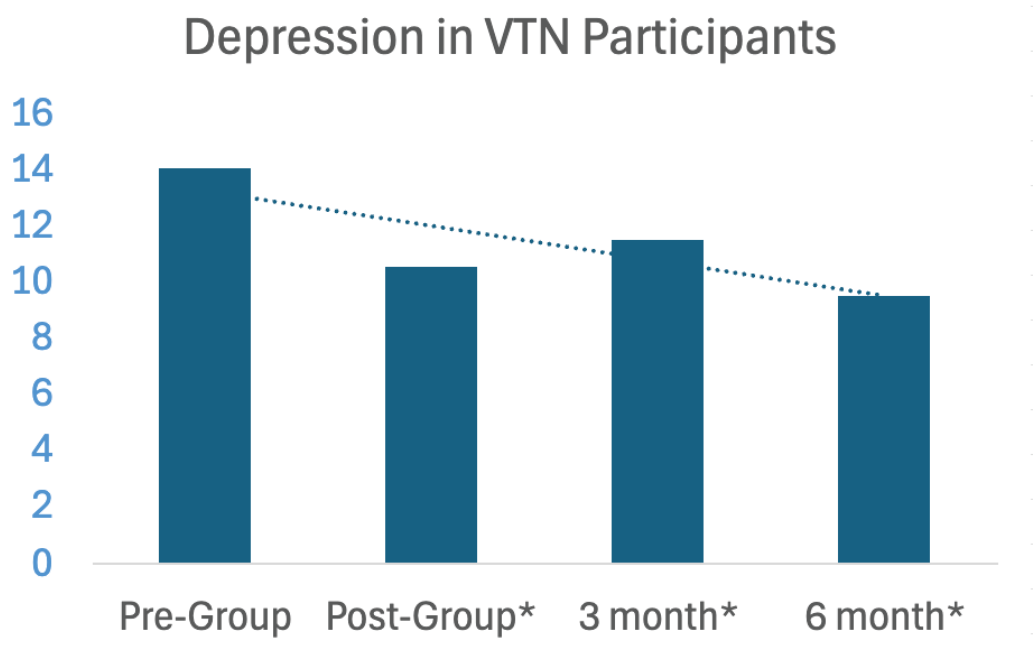


PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

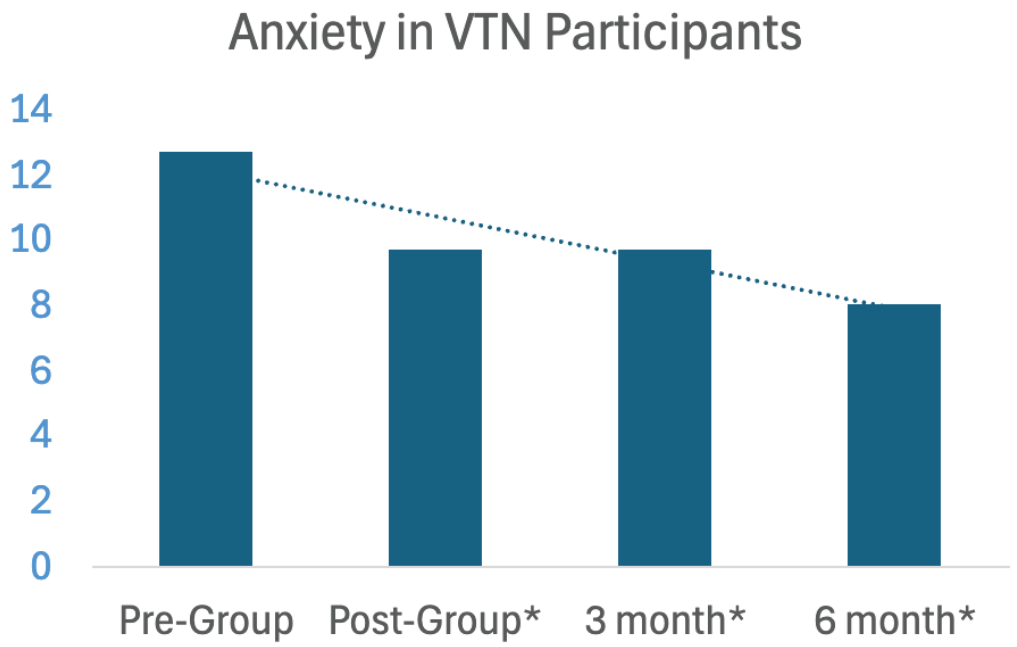
To date, our data has shown statistically significant decrease in PTSD symptoms between pre-group and post-group, with significant reductions between pre-group and 3 months, and at 6-month follow-up.



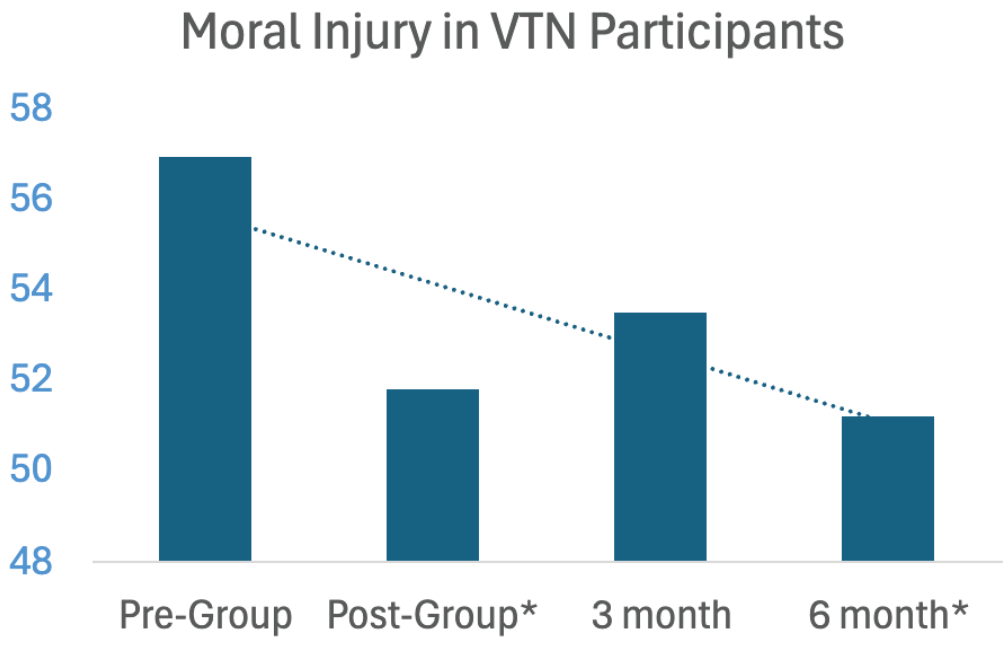
There was a statistically significant decrease in Depression symptoms between pre and post group, with significant reductions between pre-group and 3 months, and at 6-month follow-up.



There were statistically significant decreases in Anxiety symptoms between pre-group and post-group, with significant reductions between pre-group and 3 months, and at 6 month follow-up.



There was a downward trend in symptoms of Moral Injury between pre and post group, with statistically significant reductions between pre-group and 3 months, and at 6 month follow-up.



Participants reported statistically significant improvements in social and work functioning, and statistically significant reductions in anger and loneliness between pre- group and post group, with significant reduction between pre-group and three and six-month follow-up.

93.3%

Participants self-reported improvements in PTSD symptoms

90%

Participants self-reported improvements in their well-being since taking the course

Other Program Updates: In the last year, we piloted a new Couples Program which has demonstrated positive outcomes in eight groups delivered across four provinces. There was a statistically significant increase in relationship satisfaction between pre- and post-group, with an upward trend maintained between pre-group and 3 months, and a statistically significant increase at 6-month follow-up.

VETERANS TRANSITION NETWORK PUBLICATIONS

Books & Book Chapters

Cox, D., Black, T., Westwood, M., & Chan, E. (2013). Transition focused treatment: An uncontrolled study of a group program for veterans. In Aiken, B. & Belanger, A. (Eds.). Beyond the line: military and veteran health (p. 281 – 290). McGill – Queen's University Press. Kingston: ON

Westwood, M. J. & Wilensky, P. (2005) Therapeutic enactment: Restoring vitality through trauma repair in groups. Group Action Press

Borgen, W. A., Pollard, D., Amundson, N., & Westwood, M. (1989). Employment groups: The counselling connection. Toronto: Lugus Press. (281 pages).

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Cox, D. W., Baugh, L. M., McCloskey, K., & Iyar, M. (2018). Social causation or social erosion? Evaluating the association between social support and PTSD among Veterans in a transition program. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health.*

Cox, D. W., Motl, T. C., Bakker, A. M., Lunt, R. A. (2018). Cognitive fusion and life satisfaction in veterans: Examining the mediating roles of emotion dysregulation. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science, 8* (1), 1-7. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2018.02.002

Cox, D. W., Bakker, A. M., & Naifeh, J. A. (2017). Emotion dysregulation and social support in PTSD and depression: A study of trauma-exposed veterans. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 30 (5), 545-549. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jts.22226

Kivari, C. A., Oliffe, J. L., Borgen, W. A., & Westwood, M. J. (2016). No Man Left Behind Effectively Engaging Male Military Veterans in Counseling. American Journal of Men's Health.

Cox, D. W., Westwood, M. J., Hoover, S. M., Chan, E. K. H., Kivari, C. A., Dadson, M. R., & Zumbo, B. D. (2014). The evaluation of a group intervention for veterans who experienced military-related trauma. International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 64 (3).

Westwood, M. & Ewasiw, J. (2011). Integrating Narrative and Action Processes in Group Counseling Practice: A Multidimensional Approach for Helping Clients. Journal for Specialists in Group Work.

Westwood, M., Kuhl, D., & Shields, D. (2011). Counseling Active Military Personnel, Veterans and their Families In. Multicultural Issues in Counseling: New Approaches to Diversity (Fourth Edition). Sage Publications.

Westwood, M., McLean, H., Cave, D., Borgen, W. & Slakov, P. (2010). Coming home: A group-based approach for assisting Canadian military veterans in transition. Journal for Specialists In Group Work, 35(1), 44-68.

Westwood, M. J. (2009) The Veterans' Transition Program — Therapeutic Enactment in Action. Educational Insights, 13(2).

Al-Mashat, K., Amundson, N., Westwood, M., Buchanan, M. (2006). Iraqi Children's War Experiences: The Psychological Impact of "Operation Iraqi Freedom." International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling, 28 (2), 195-211.

Westwood, M.J., Keats, P. & Wilensky, P. (2003). Therapeutic enactment: Integrating the individual and group counselling models for change. Journal For Specialists In Group Work. 28, 2, 122-138.

Westwood, M. J., Black, T. & McLean, H. (2002) A re-entry program for peacekeeping soldiers: Promoting personal and career transitions. Canadian Journal of Counselling. 36, 221-231

Shaw, M., Westwood, M. J., & DeVries, B. (1999). Life review and guided autobiography: Integrating reflection and group based enactments. Journal of Aging Studies, 13, 109-113

Conference Presentations

Lapsley, S., McDaniel, Thorne, O. & the VTN. Masculine risk depression across genders: Insights from Veterans Transition Network participants. Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research Forum (October, 2025) Ottawa, ON, Canada

Thorne, O., McDaniel, M., Lapsley, S. & the VTN. *What we have done and what we have not done: Exploring moral injury in military service members and veterans.* Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research Forum (October, 2023) Gatineau, QC, Canada

Thorne, O., Whitehead, P., Lapsley, S. & Allen, D. *Veterans Transition Network 5 Day Training Skills Course: Preserving Connection in a Time of Isolation*. Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research Forum (October, 2022) Halifax, NS, Canada

Westwood, M.J., Lapsley, S., Garthside, T., Shelton C., Langley, L. "I've done a terrible thing: Group-based soulrepair after moral injury. Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research Forum (2018, October). Regina, SK.

Lapsley, S. (2015, November). Understanding Paraprofessional Support in the Veterans Transition Network: What Helped and Hindered. Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research Forum (2015, November). Quebec City, QC

Cox, D.W., Kavari, C.A., Lutz, K., Owen, J.J. Evaluating a Group Program for Men's Transition: A 12-month follow-up. Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research Forum (2014, November).

Theses and Dissertations

Lapsley, S. (2015). *Understanding the role of paraprofessional support in the Veterans' Transition Program: What helped and hindered.* (Masters Thesis). Retrieved from https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0166235

Kivari, C.A. (2014). *No man left behind: Towards new models of male-engaged therapy.* (Masters Thesis). Retrieved from https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0165850

Laidler, T.D. (2014). *Studying the effects of a veterans transition program style retreat (company of men) on participants' perception and experience of masculinity.* (Masters Thesis). Retrieved from https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0166881

Black, T.G. (2003). *Individual narratives of change in therapeutic enactment.* (PhD dissertation). Retrieved from: https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0091361

Other

Lapsley, S., Allen, D., Thorne, O., and the VTN. (2022). *The Veterans Transition Network Tiered Peer Support Training, Delivery, and Program Evaluation Report.* Unpublished Report.

If you have any questions about our Program Evaluation or Research Initiatives, or if you are interested in collaborating with us, please reach out to us:

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