OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

Last Updated – May 2026

RESEARCH HISTORY

The Veterans Transition Program (VTP) was first designed and delivered as a research project to investigate new methods of helping Canadian veterans 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.

In 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 and after group, and at 3 and 6 months following the program. Our evaluation protocol assesses numerous constructs that have been linked with successful veteran transition. These metrics focus 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.

MEASURES ADMINISTERED IN THE VTN PROGRAM EVALUATION PACKAGE

Scale	Pre	Post	3 m	6 m
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			
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

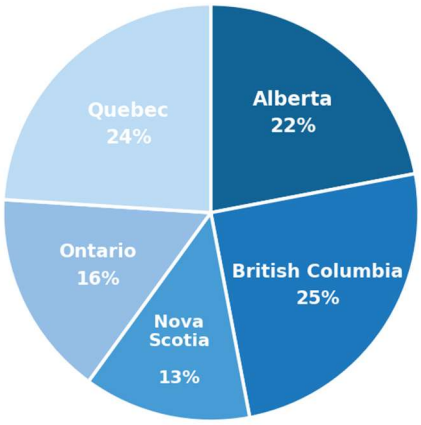
DATA ANALYSES

We tested group differences using t-tests with pooled variance on applicable measures between pre-group, post-group, and at three-and 6-month follow-up.

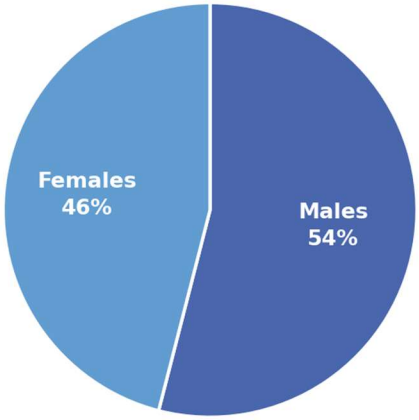
The most recent data analysis performed in April 2026 included data from 148 veterans and first responders across 34 Level 1 TSC and Level 2 TEC programs between April 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026. Statistically significant decreases in key outcomes variables were found between scores on pre and post group measures. These improvements in symptoms were maintained at 3 and 6-month follow-up. Findings align with our cumulative data, strengthening confidence in the effectiveness of our programs.
Below are some key outcomes of the data analysis. Data collection and analysis is ongoing and updated annually.

Participant Demographics

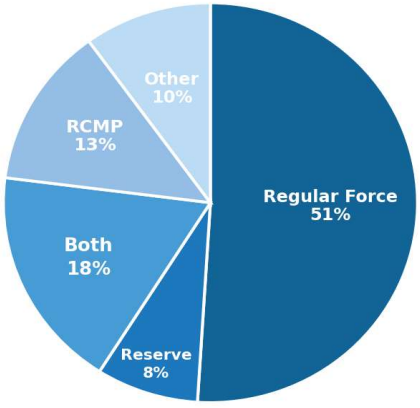
GROUP DELIVERY BY PROVINCE



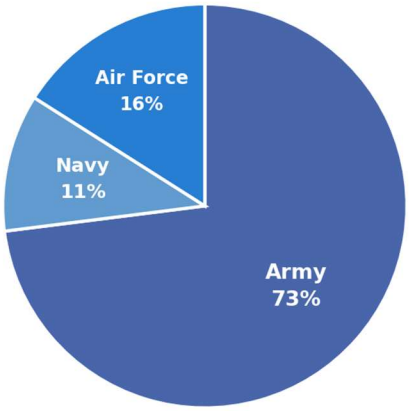
VTN GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER



VTN PARTICIPANTS TYPE OF SERVICE

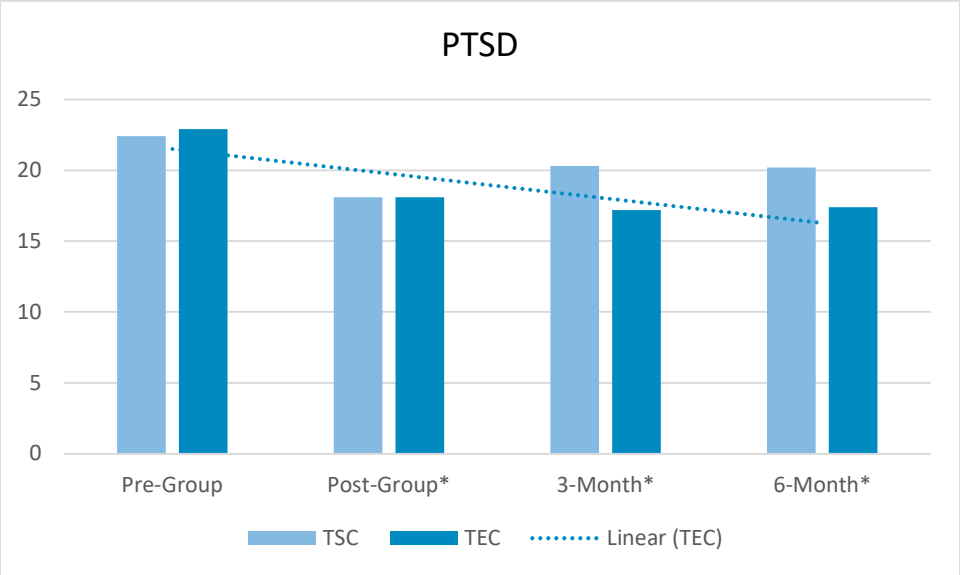


VTN PARTICIPANTS BRANCH OF SERVICE

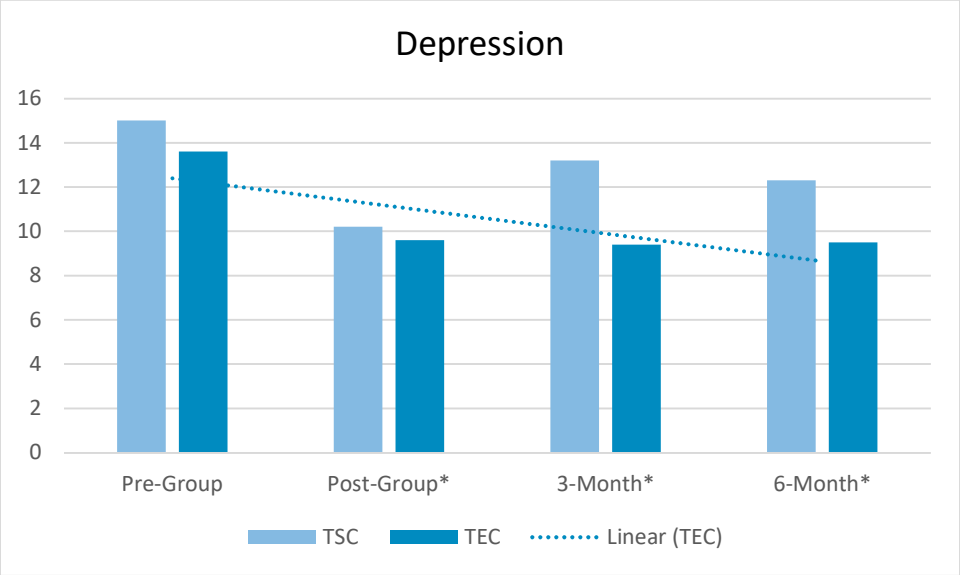


Participant Outcomes (April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026)

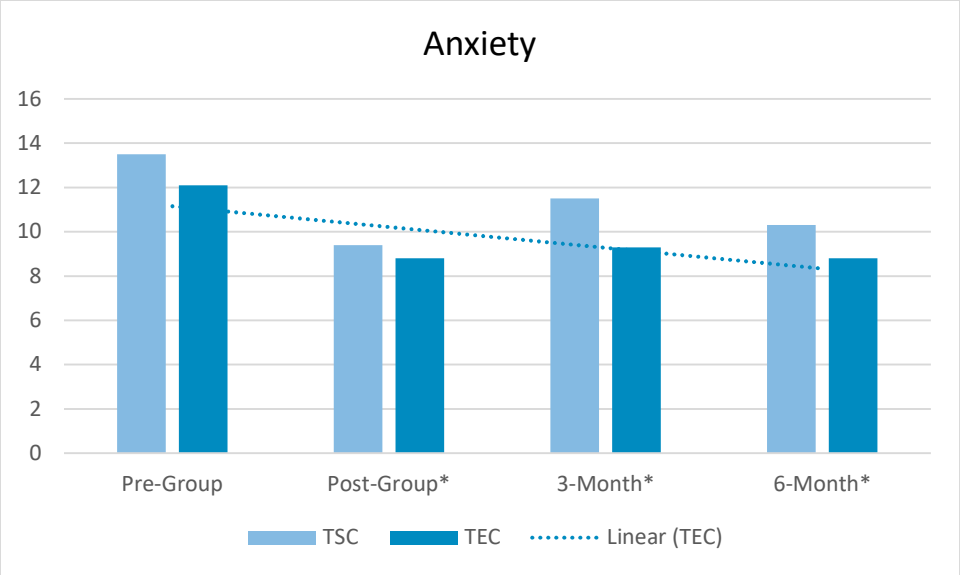
To date, our data has shown statistically significant decrease in PTSD symptoms between pre-group and post-group for both programs, with significant reductions between pre-group and 3 months, and at 6-month follow-up in the TEC program.



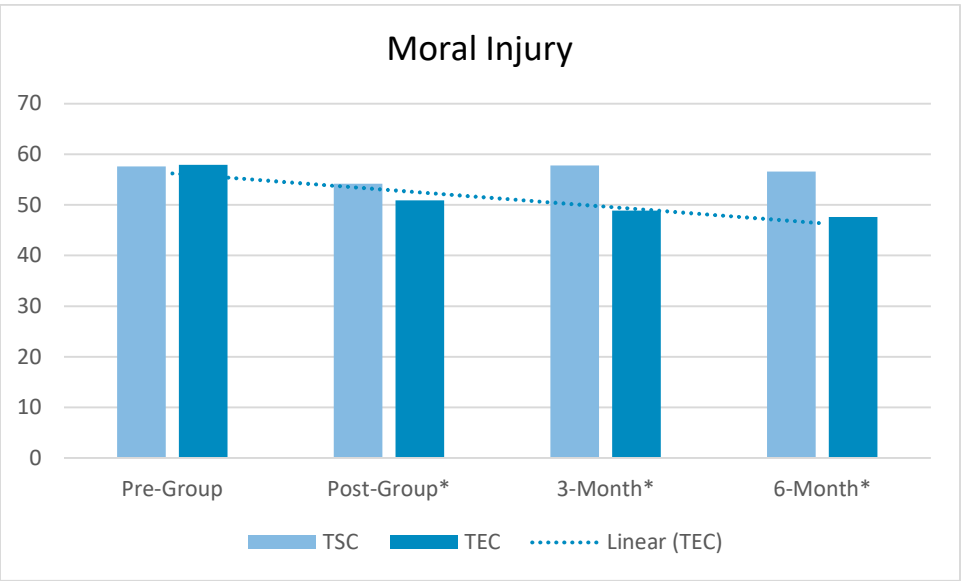
There was a statistically significant decrease in Depression symptoms between pre and post group for both programs, with significant reductions between pre-group and 3 months, and at 6-month follow-up in the TEC program.



There was a statistically significant decrease in Anxiety symptoms between pre-group and post-group for both programs, with significant reductions between pre-group and 3 months, and at 6-month follow-up in the TEC program.



There was a statistically significant decrease in symptoms of Moral Injury between pre and post group in the TEC program, with statistically significant reductions in symptoms at 3 and 6-month follow-up time points. Results for the TSC program were non-significant, suggesting the importance of the TEC intervention for addressing Moral Injury.



Additionally:

- Participants reported statistically significant improvements in anger and loneliness between pre-group and post group across both programs, with the gains maintained at 3 ad 6-month follow-up. Following the TEC program, participants reported statistically significant improvements in work and social functioning at 3- and 6-month follow-up time points.

- 96% of Level 2 participants reported improvements in PTSD and well-being symptoms at 3- and 6-month follow-up

Our Stronger, Closer, Together couples program continues to demonstrate positive outcomes. Seven groups were offered across the country, with 54 participants reporting with high program satisfaction, strong group cohesion, and improved relationship satisfaction following the group. Gains in relationship satisfaction were maintained at 3- and 6- months following the program.

Limitations of this analysis include attrition in the sample over time, and smaller sample sizes due to the annual reporting. Statistical remedies (alternative tests employed when assumptions for variance are not met) address issues due to attrition. Our annual results align with our cumulative analysis (2024-2026) with a larger sample size, suggesting robustness of the findings.

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

Shaw, M. & Westwood, M. (2002). *Transformative Learning and Autobiographical Life Review: The Canadian War Veterans Life Review Project*. In J. Webster, Life Review Method: Theory and Practice. Springer Publishing Co.

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

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, 5(1),* 71-79. https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh.2017-0040

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,* 12(2), 241-251

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), 367-380.

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,* 36(1), 78-93.

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

Becker, S., Lapsley, S. & McDaniel, M. (June 2026). *Stronger, Closer, Together: Evaluation of an EFT-informed group intervention for military couples.* Canadian Psychological Association 2026 Annual Conventions, Montreal, QC

Lapsley, S. (April, 2026) *Lessening the impact of moral injury with therapeutic enactment.* International Centre for Moral Injury Interdisciplinary Conference, Durham, UK

Thorne, O. (October 2025). *Building a bridge home: A primer on military cultural competency.* National Conference on Ending Homelessness, Montreal, QC

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 soul repair 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, please to reach out to us:

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