



Mainland BC **Military Family Resource Centre**

News release

Sept. 11, 2018

Mental health first aid course offered to medically released vets, families

Vancouver, BC – The Mainland BC Military Family Resource Centre (BCMFRC) believes that the strongest force is family and, for that reason, is presenting this month in the neighbouring community of Langley its first mental health first aid course for medically released veterans and family members.

Surrey is home to approximately 3,000 veterans, and is the site of one of only five Veteran Affairs Canada (VAC) offices in BC, allowing them better access to VAC and BCMFRC resources. Since November 2010, VAC has been serving more modern-day Canadian Armed Forces veterans than traditional war service veterans.

Mental Health First Aid – Veteran Community is one component of a new Veteran Family Program launched last April which BCMFRC delivers on behalf of VAC. The Veteran Family Program supports the health and well-being of families as they transition from military to civilian life.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), mental illness indirectly affects all Canadians at some time through a family member, friend or colleague. In any given year, one in five people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness.

It's not uncommon for people to learn regular first aid to prepare them for family medical emergencies such as burns and sprains. The mental health first aid course takes that preparedness to the next level, providing valuable, potentially life-saving information and crisis intervention skills to manage mental health challenges.

A range of mental health issues will be covered by the course, including mood, anxiety, trauma-related, psychotic and substance use disorders. The course will also teach first aid skills for dealing with drug overdose, suicidal behaviour, panic attacks, psychosis and acute stress reaction.

Ultimately, the course will enable participants to build the skills and confidence necessary to engage in effective conversations about mental health, help them recognize the most common mental health problems and illnesses, increase their comfort level with, and willingness to, help others, and decrease the stigma and discrimination around mental health problems and illnesses.

"Mental health issues are often met with significant stigma in the world. That's what's so great about Mental Health First Aid – Veteran Community: because the course is about helping others, participants don't have to worry about standing out as having a problem if they attend. In this way, the course is truly non-threatening for those who'd like to learn more about dealing with these issues," said Tracy Cromwell, BCMFRC executive director.

Although designed for medically released veterans and their family members, the two-day course is free and open to anyone, and grants certification in Mental Health First Aid – Veteran Community to those who complete it. It takes place Sept. 26 and 27, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Langley Events Centre, 7888

200 Street in Langley. Space is limited and registration will be on a first come, first served basis. Register by Sept. 21 by contacting veterans@bcmfrc.com.

To find out more, go to www.bcmfrc.com. Additional sessions are planned for other BC locations in the year ahead.

Canadian Armed Forces families face a unique intersection of challenges: extended separations from loved ones; frequent relocation; and the elevated risk associated with the military member's occupation. The Mainland BC Military Family Resource Centre (BCMFRC) is a registered charitable organization (Reg. No. 1387 24430 RR0001) that supports more than 1,600 military and veteran families in British Columbia, offering resources and services to help address these challenges.

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