



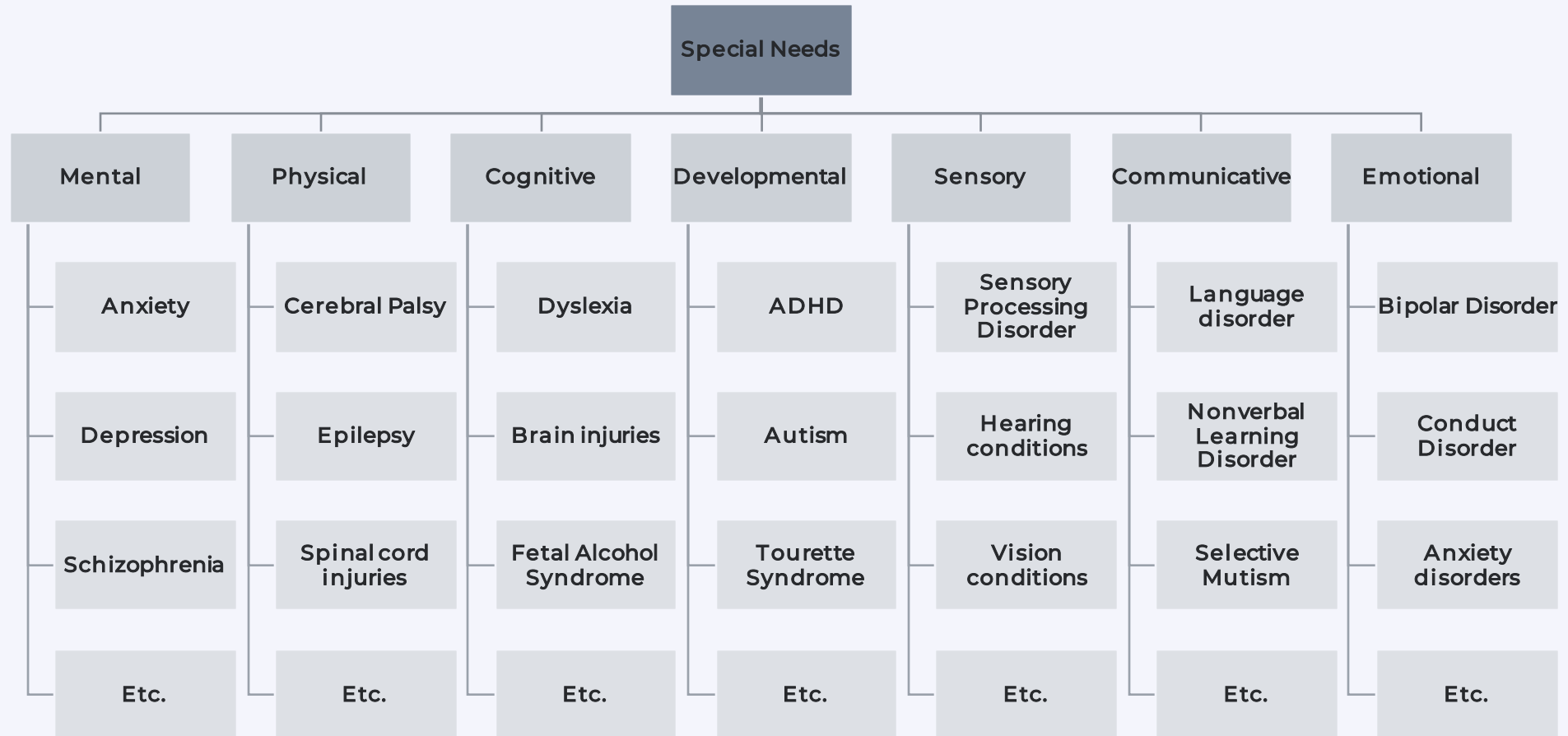
# **Canadian Armed Forces Families with Special Needs:**

## **High-level Findings**

February 2024



# What is Special Needs?





## Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)

- Special Needs is a complex matter
- Not much is known, systematically, about Special Needs in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) community
- Relocations due to a military postings cause increased stress on CAF families with Special Needs
- No single organization has the capacity to tackle this matter alone



# What Do We Know?

Demographics	Accessing and Navigating Services	Impact on Children	Impact on Caregivers	Relocation and Satisfaction with CAF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited information</li><li>• ~ 8% of personnel have a child with special needs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of awareness of services</li><li>• Difficulty navigating services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relocation causes interrupted social, health and education support systems = negative impact on child development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lower levels of mental well-being</li><li>• Higher levels of depression</li><li>• Lower self-efficacy</li><li>• Less support from family (both sides)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extra responsibilities upon relocation = more stress</li><li>• Spouses of CAF member with child with special needs = less likely to have employment = greater resentment toward CAF</li></ul>





# How is Special Needs Defined?

- CFMWS, CAF, Provinces/Territories, Canada
  - No common definition
  - No common terminology
- Why is Special Needs difficult to define?
  - Goal:
    - To be inclusive and eliminate discrimination
  - Result:
    - Broad and illustrative (vague) definitions



**Special Needs, Complex Needs,  
Neuro-divergent, Exceptionality,  
Diverse Needs, Developmental  
Needs, Intensive Needs, Disability....**



# What About Special Needs Policies and Services?

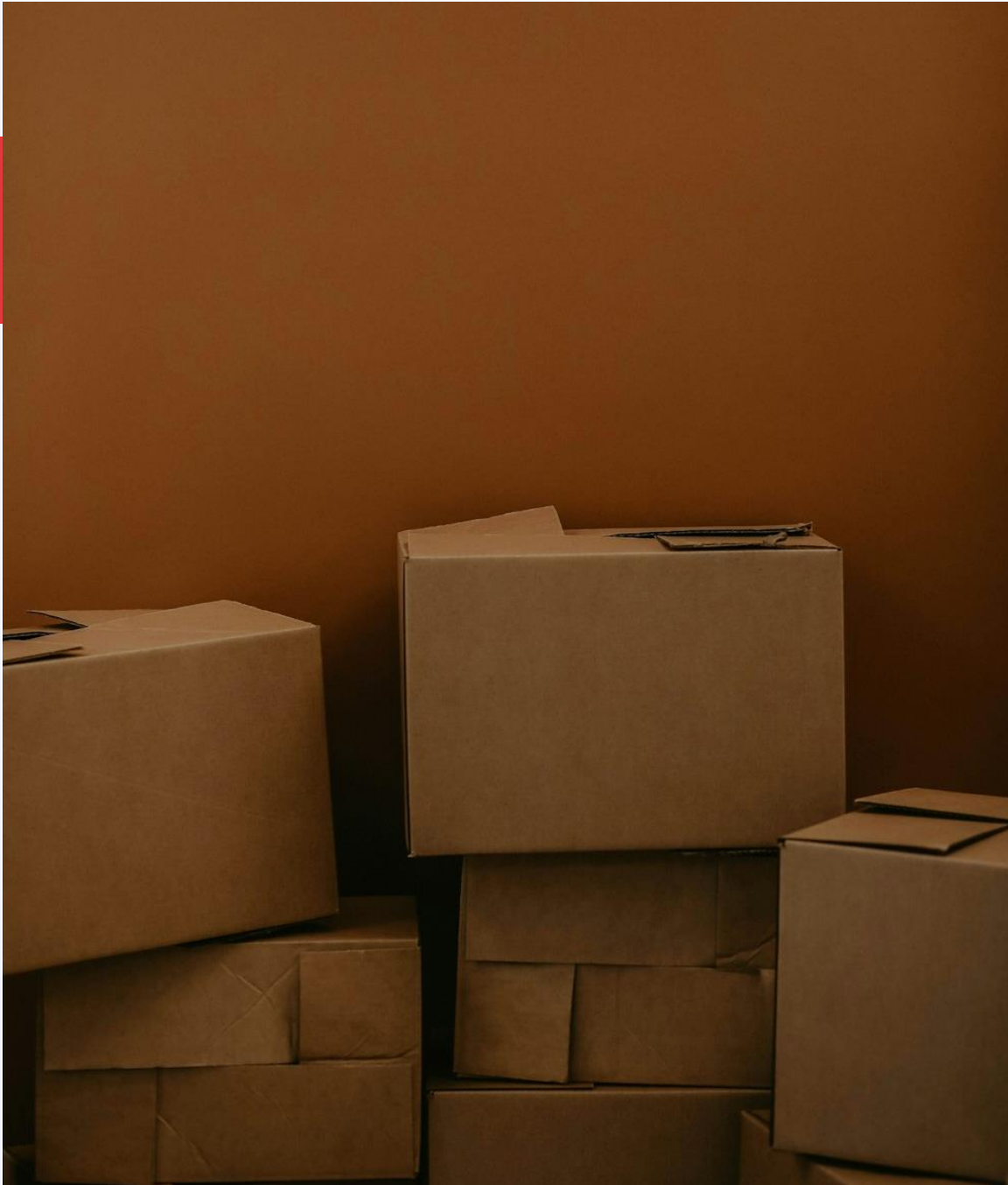
- Policies/regulations and service provision
  - CFMWS, CAF, Provinces/Territories, Federal
    - Founded on vague definitions – not equitable across the different organizations and provinces/territories
- Overall: Complex nature



# What Has/Is Being Done for Special Needs?

- Environment scan
  - Overall: Quite a bit being done about Special Needs
  - Within MFS, CFMWS and MFRCs
    - Past work
    - Current work (on-going)
  - CAF/Department of National Defence
  - Defence community organizations
  - Provincially/territorially
  - Federally
  - Other governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)





# What Are the Known Challenges?

- Support for CAF families exists widely, but mainly on a case-by-case basis
- Military lifestyle (Relocation) creates increased stress on CAF families with special needs
- No single organization can tackle this alone







# Where Can We Go From Here?

Purpose of report - Remaining questions - Collaborative effort

Thank you

