



## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE OFFICE



### Convalescent Leave & Recovery Time Following a Sexual Assault

Experiencing sexual assault can be a life-changing event. Sometimes a little time away from work can be helpful. For military members seeking recovery time following a sexual assault, an updated policy was published on August 7, 2025, addressing Military Leave and Liberty.

**Changes in eligibility for Convalescent Leave:** A “healthcare diagnosis” and a “finding of unfit for duty” are now needed from a healthcare provider. Service members should note that being “unfit for duty” in this context is not a comprehensive assessment of your abilities as a warrior, but rather a description of the current state of your health. Whether you have a fever or a physical injury, such conditions could interfere with work and can make you “unfit for duty.” The intent of Convalescent Leave is to allow sufficient time for rest and recovery from a diagnosed medical condition.

**Who can approve Convalescent Leave?** A Service member’s unit commander or the director of a military treatment facility (MTF) may approve Convalescent Leave requests for a Service member, during active Service, who is diagnosed with a medical condition and is determined not yet fit for duty as a result of that condition. Medical or mental healthcare providers determine such member’s fitness for duty and may recommend Convalescent Leave for recovery.

#### Special Liberty

For Service members who received medical or mental healthcare associated with a sexual assault where Convalescent Leave was not recommended, there is a new “Special Liberty” option.

- In accordance with DoDI 1327.06, healthcare providers should consider recommending to the Service member’s unit commander that “Special Liberty” be granted to the Service member for up to 48 hours immediately following the healthcare encounter, depending on the Service member’s individual circumstances, to allow for immediate rest and recovery.
  - A Service member should consider having a follow-up appointment with the appropriate healthcare provider before the 48-hour “Special Liberty” period expires so the healthcare provider may assess any ongoing needs for Convalescent Leave, as appropriate.
- Privacy: Healthcare providers recommending “Special Liberty” must not disclose that the Service member was seen for care associated with a sexual assault, which protects a victim’s privacy and his/her confidentiality if he/she decides to file a report.

If you have questions about “Special Liberty,” please speak with an MTF healthcare provider. A SARC or SAPR VA can assist with scheduling that meeting.

**Who can approve “Special Liberty”?** Only the Service member’s unit commander can approve “Special Liberty.”

**What about “Sick in Quarters”?** In the past, “sick in quarters” may have been used for this purpose. However, it can no longer be used for this purpose. “Sick in quarters” is Convalescent Leave, which now requires a diagnosed medical condition and a finding of unfit for duty to be eligible.

#### Restricted Reporting Concerns About Privacy

- For Convalescent Leave: The MTF Director can approve the leave. See DoDI 6495.02, Vol. 1.
- For “Special Liberty”: Healthcare providers recommending “Special Liberty” must not disclose that the patient was seen for care associated with a sexual assault. See DoDI 1327.06.

#### Do I need to request Convalescent Leave to go to regular medical or mental healthcare appointments, or to go see my SARC?

No. Under existing policy and procedures, commanders should allow members to attend, in normal duty status during normal duty hours, any scheduled medical or non-medical appointments, services, or counseling related to their sexual assault incidents in order to support recovery. These activities are the appointed place of duty.

**For more information about Convalescent Leave and “Special Liberty,” see DoDI 1327.06, “Military Leave, Liberty, and Administrative Absence.” For Convalescent Leave and Restricted Reporting, see DoDI 6495.02, Vol. 1.**

For more information, please visit [www.sapr.mil](http://www.sapr.mil).

For confidential victim assistance, call or visit the **Safe Helpline** at 877-995-5247 or [safehelpline.org](http://safehelpline.org).