

Defense Advisory Committee for
the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct

Instructing Prevention in PME

*Preparing Instructors to Deliver Prevention Content
in Professional Military Education (PME)*

Executive Summary

March 2025



Executive Summary

Introduction

As directed by Congress, the Defense Advisory Committee for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct (DAC-PSM, or “Committee”) undertook this study to assist the Department of Defense (DoD, or “Department”) in strengthening its efforts to incorporate sexual assault prevention into the professional military education (PME) provided to its leaders.

The DAC-PSM was established in 2020 as mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20 NDAA). The DAC-PSM is tasked with providing independent advice and recommendations on the prevention of sexual misconduct involving members of the Armed Forces, as well as the sexual misconduct prevention policies, programs, and practices of each Military Department and Military Service Academy, including the Coast Guard Academy. Given that the Committee is comprised of members with expertise in prevention research and implementation in both military and civilian settings, including training design and development, the DAC-PSM is uniquely qualified to address this study topic.

Study Focus and Methodology

As part of the FY21 NDAA, Congress directed the DAC-PSM, through its Prevention Training and Activities Subcommittee, to examine PME relative to the prevention of sexual misconduct. Given the breadth of this directive, the DAC-PSM sought the insights of DoD prevention experts regarding the types of study recommendations that would be most useful to the Department and, as a result, learned of the extensive efforts currently underway to identify prevention content requirements for training. To avoid the duplication of existing DoD efforts and ensure compliance with the laws governing the activities of federal advisory committees, the Subcommittee elected to focus the study on DoD’s approach to the preparation of instructors to deliver prevention-related content within PME, as well as to consider the unique needs of instructors delivering content to junior leaders (i.e., those in grades O1-O3 and E4-E6).

To meet the information needs of this study, the Subcommittee conducted a literature and policy review, considered submissions from the Services and met with topic experts from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). At the DAC-PSM’s June 27, 2024 public meeting, the Subcommittee shared its initial findings, and at the November 14, 2024 public meeting, the Subcommittee presented its final findings and proposed recommendations for discussion. Following deliberation, the Committee voted to approve all recommendations presented in this report.

Study Findings and Recommendations

While developing its proposed study recommendations, the Subcommittee leaned on several key observations to ensure that recommendations offered to DoD address areas of demonstrated need:

- **Instruction matters:** The content, nature, and quality of instruction all have direct impact on learning transfer, and ultimately, on the ability of leaders to demonstrate competencies in the prevention of sexual misconduct, as well as to establish a healthy climate and military culture.
- **Impact of leaders on unit climate:** Leaders are responsible for establishing healthy unit climate and military culture, and yet are often not being adequately equipped with knowledge of the problem or the prevention strategies and skills they need to address it.

- **Prevention as a critical leadership skill:** To ensure optimal military readiness and warfighting capacity of individual Service members and their units, prevention knowledge and skills-building must be effectively incorporated into leadership training at all levels.

Building off these three high-level observations, the Subcommittee identified a series of opportunities for the Department to ensure that those who present prevention content in a PME setting are ready for the task. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Committee's recommendations suggest three broad areas of action for the Department to consider, framed within the process typically used by the Department and Services in the roll out of any new initiative: Policy, Implementation, and Evaluation and Oversight.

Figure 1: Actions to Address Study Recommendations

Action Area	Action Step	Associated Study Recommendations*
Policy Note: Clear policy <u>must</u> be in place to effectively guide the standardization of Implementation and Evaluation & Oversight.		
Establish clear policy requirements for the provision of prevention-related content in PME. Owning Party: DoD	Further define requirements for the incorporation of prevention-related content in PME. Define requirements and processes that ensure content is delivered by appropriate and well-prepared staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and continue to confirm alignment between policy and learning requirements, starting with Department prioritization of prevention competencies as integral components of effective leadership. • Revise training policies and applicable guidance to establish the "who" and the "how" for the provision of prevention instruction within PME. • Identify and establish key topics and minimum requirements for the incorporation of prevention content into PME, as well as processes to standardize and oversee its delivery.
Implementation		
Define leaders' prevention competency needs by career band. Owning Party: DoD	Customize the various levels of PME to incorporate grade-appropriate prevention content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and continue to confirm alignment between policy and learning requirements, starting with Department prioritization of prevention competencies as integral components of effective leadership. • Take intentional steps to institutionalize prevention as a critical leadership skill at all levels.
Utilize instructors who are intentionally selected and prepared to deliver prevention content. Owning Party: Services	Determine who will deliver prevention content in PME. Develop model to ensure that instructors have the necessary skills and prevention expertise to deliver PME content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise training policies and applicable guidance to establish the "who" and the "how" for the provision of prevention instruction within PME. • Identify and establish key topics and minimum requirements for the incorporation of prevention content into PME, as well as processes to standardize and oversee its delivery. • Establish a selection, training, and performance model that ensures consistent instructor competencies in the delivery of prevention training material. • Develop training content, instructor skills, and subject matter expertise, based on effectiveness and outcomes associated with lessons learned from other DoD prevention efforts.

<p>Establish processes to ensure that prevention-related PME content delivery follows policy and has desired impact.</p> <p>Owning Party: DoD and Services</p>	<p>Develop oversight approach to ensure that prevention-related PME content is being delivered appropriately and as required by policy.</p> <p>Collect data to determine the effectiveness of the delivery of prevention content within PME, as well as the impact of training on desired outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and establish key topics and minimum requirements for the incorporation of prevention content into PME, as well as processes to standardize and oversee its delivery. Establish processes for the evaluation of and accountability for the instruction of prevention in PME. Collect data on the effectiveness of learning transfer and the impact of training on outcomes.
---	---	--

* See Ch.2 and 3 of this report for a fuller discussion of these recommendations and the study findings that led to them.

Highlighted Study Finding – Core Policy Challenge

The Subcommittee began this study assuming that prevention-related training for junior leaders was present in PME across the Services and that it was being delivered by instructors with subject matter expertise or other prevention qualifications. However, the Services' submissions demonstrated that neither assumption was accurate. Upon learning of the dearth of dedicated prevention-related PME for junior leaders, the Subcommittee directed its attention toward the policies governing PME. Examination of these policies revealed that current policy guidance lacks needed specificity on the requirements for the instruction of prevention material in PME. The Subcommittee found that DoD policy outlines prevention learning requirements for PME audiences (the "what") but does not provide guidance on the role best positioned to deliver this content (the "who") or establish requirements or processes for optimization of prevention instructor development and content delivery (the "how"). The absence of more detailed guidance on the requirements for effective delivery of prevention instruction within PME leads to inconsistencies in opportunity for leaders to master these important competencies.

Further, the Subcommittee found that junior leaders are not consistently receiving PME across the Services, regardless of topic area, and in the instances where PME is provided, those courses do not include specific prevention content taught by instructors with expertise in prevention. This training gap is especially troubling since junior leaders often supervise the Service population most affected by sexual violence: those in junior enlisted grades (E1-E4). Because of the far-reaching effects of sexual misconduct on both individual Service members and entire units, the Committee urges the Department not to wait until leaders are receiving mid-career PME to address key prevention concepts.

The DAC-PSM appreciates the opportunity to consider this critical issue and stands ready and willing to address questions from the Department and/or Services on any findings and recommendations. This report highlights opportunities for DoD to further institutionalize its advancing prevention efforts within the Services' learning communities and, in doing so, to equip its leaders with the critical prevention competencies needed to keep Service members safe and ready to meet the mission.