



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
**SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION
AND RESPONSE OFFICE**



**DoD RENAMES EXCEPTIONAL SARC OF THE YEAR AWARD
IN HONOR OF ELIZABETH “LIZ” BLANC**
MAY 2020

The Department of Defense announced May 19 that it is renaming an award recognizing exceptional Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) in honor of Elizabeth “Liz” Blanc.

Liz was a DoD professional who dedicated her life to supporting victims of sexual assault before passing away in March after a long battle with cancer.

“Renaming this award is a small way to honor Liz’s immeasurable impact to the Department of Defense,” said Dr. Nathan Galbreath, acting director of the DoD’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO). “She tirelessly worked to assist victims of sexual assault even up to a few days before her passing. She was a consummate professional and one of the most highly skilled advocates with whom I’ve ever worked.”



Liz, 39, graduated from Boston University with a Bachelor’s in Psychology and later received a Master’s in Psychology from Walden University. From there, she dedicated 15 years to the sexual assault prevention and response field.

Her service included supporting sexual assault victims as a SARC for the Department of the Navy for nine years. SARCs play a pivotal role in the department’s sexual assault prevention and response program. When any service member reports a sexual assault, the SARC addresses the victim’s immediate safety needs, connects the victim to recovery-oriented resources and assigns a victim advocate to provide advocacy and assistance throughout the medical, investigative and legal processes. In addition, SARCs work closely with other installation responders, train thousands of military members annually, and help military leaders improve their support of service members impacted by sexual assault.

In 2016, Liz joined SAPRO as a program manager for the Safe HelpLine program - the DoD’s sole, 24/7, anonymous hotline for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. In 2019, she became the Senior Victim Assistance Advisor for SAPRO, overseeing all victim assistance programs for the DoD.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office

“I have known Liz since she began at SAPRO in 2016 and have always been impressed with her talent and her commitment. She was a reflection of everything we stood for as an organization and I can say there will never be another that could fill her shoes. This Department has lost such an amazing soul,” observed Dr. Elizabeth P. Van Winkle, Executive Director, Office of Force Resiliency, in a message to colleagues upon learning of Liz’s passing.

Liz is survived by her husband, and two young sons, whom she loved dearly.

“While this award has been around for several years, it takes on an even more special meaning now that it is named after Liz,” Dr. Galbreath said. “Her legacy will live on with her family, the many survivors she has helped, and the professionals in the field who strive to uphold the same high standards of assistance and professionalism that she did.”

The DoD recognized six SARCs for the honor, now known as the “Liz Blanc Exceptional SARC of the Year Award.”

The winners of the 2020 Liz Blanc Exceptional SARC of the Year are:

- Air Force: 1st Lt. Sarah L. Halterman, 60th Air Mobility Wing, Travis Air Force Base, California;
- Army: Sgt. 1st Class Maria C. Rivera, I Corps & Joint Base Lewis-McChord
- Coast Guard: Ms. Shannon Norenberg, United States Coast Guard Academy
- Navy: Mrs. Raquel Hernandez, Naval Air Station Lemoore, California
- Marine Corps: Ms. Shirley D. Stephens, Marine Corps Installations Pacific (MCIPAC) Marine Corps Base Camp Butler
- National Guard Bureau: Ms. Jacquelyn E. Tellier 102d Intelligence Wing, Otis Air National Guard Base, Massachusetts

If you or someone you know in the DOD community needs completely anonymous, confidential, 24/7, specialized support, please call Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247 or visit <https://www.safehelpline.org/>