



## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE OFFICE



### SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE: 101 INFO SHEET

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) serves as the single point of authority, accountability and oversight of the DoD SAPR program. The Department's programmatic approach is prevention-focused with an uncompromising commitment to victim assistance.

#### Important Concepts

- Sexual Assault
  - The term sexual assault as defined in DOD Instruction 6595.02 refers to adult sexual crimes prohibited by Article 120, of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, ranging from penetrative crimes like rape, to contact crimes like abusive sexual contact (e.g., groping of genitalia). For exact legal language and more information, visit: <https://www.sapr.mil/sapr-and-ucmj>
- Violence Prevention
  - There is no single prevention activity or program the Department can implement to reduce and eliminate sexual assault from the military. Sexual assault prevention requires appropriate policies, infrastructure, resources, research, and a trained workforce working collaboratively to reduce and stop the occurrence of the crime.
  - DOD uses a public health approach to sexual assault prevention, which leverages data-informed decision-making to develop, implement, and evaluate prevention activities that provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people.
  - In the military, sexual assault prevention focuses on improving unit climate. Units with less sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and workplace incivility also tend to have less sexual assault. DOD leaders at all levels must promote healthy workplace climates and correct behavior that is counter to the military's culture of dignity, respect, and inclusion.
- Estimated Prevalence and Reporting Rates
  - Sexual assault is an underreported crime, meaning that it occurs more often than is reported to appropriate authorities. This is true for both the military and civilian sectors of the U.S. population. As a result, sexual assault *reports* provide an incomplete measure of how many Service members experience a sexual assault. To better capture the number of Service members that may experience a sexual assault each year, the Department uses an estimate of "prevalence."
  - "Sexual assault prevalence" is assessed via a scientific survey to estimate the number of Service members who indicated experiencing a sexual assault in the 12 months prior to being surveyed. Prevalence rates are used to provide an estimate of the scope of the problem of sexual assault in the Armed Forces. The Department works to decrease prevalence through prevention efforts.
  - Of those Service members who experience a sexual assault, about 1 in 3 *report* their incident of sexual assault to a DOD authority using either an Unrestricted or Restricted report. The Department encourages greater reporting to connect victims with assistance and care and to hold offenders appropriately accountable.

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- Unrestricted Report
  - Allows adult victims of sexual assault to report crimes without requesting confidentiality of their allegations. Commanders are notified of unrestricted report allegations, including the personally identifiable information of the victim and alleged offender, if known. Unrestricted reports are investigated by Military Criminal Investigative Organizations (MCIOs). Victims are referred to appropriate assistance services.
- Restricted Report
  - Permits adult victims of sexual assault to confidentially report the crime to specified individuals without notifying command or law enforcement officials without disclosure of personally identifiable information of the victim or alleged offender. Commanders are informed an assault has occurred, but are not provided with the victim's or the offender's personally identifying information. Victims are referred to appropriate assistance services.
- Catch a Serial Offender (CATCH) Program
  - The CATCH Program allows eligible persons making a Restricted Report an opportunity to anonymously disclose suspect information, if known, to help DOD identify serial offenders. Participating sexual assault victims (Service members and adult dependents) confidentially provide information to criminal investigators and agree to be contacted if the suspect in their Restricted Report is alleged to have assaulted another person (a "match" in the CATCH system). Victims then have the option to convert their Restricted Report to Unrestricted and participate in the military justice system.

## Key Resources

- **Policy and Program Information:** SAPRO Website <https://www.sapr.mil>
  - SAPRO publishes its policies, annual reports, survey results, and other information on this website.
- **Victim Assistance:** Department of Defense (DOD) Safe Helpline
  - Safe Helpline is the Department's sole hotline for members of the DOD community affected by sexual assault. The Safe Helpline is a completely anonymous, confidential, 24/7, specialized service providing help and information anytime, anywhere.
  - Contact Information: 877-995-5247 or <https://www.safehelpline.org>
- **Other Assistance Resources:**
  - Military Crisis Line
    - The Military Crisis Line provides free victim assistance support for all Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and all Veterans, even if they are not registered with Veterans Affairs (VA) or enrolled in VA health care.
    - Contact Information: 800-273-8255, then press 1, or access online chat by texting 838255.

## For Congressional Meeting Requests, Interview Requests, or Media Inquiries

- Office of the Secretary of Defense, Legislative Affairs (OSD(LA))
  - Contact Information: (703) 697-6210
- Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs (OSD(PA))
  - Contact Information: (703) 571-3343 or [osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil](mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil)

## SAPR Top Five Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q1: Do increases in reported incidents mean there has been an increase in the occurrence of sexual assault?**

A1: In general, an increase in the number of reported incidents does not necessarily mean there has been an increase in the amount of crime. Sexual assault is a historically underreported crime in both the military and civilian sectors of U.S. society, meaning that it occurs more than is reported to authorities. Currently, about 30% of Service members who are estimated to have experienced a sexual assault reported their incident. As a result, reported incidents are not a complete measure of how often the crime occurs or the number of persons impacted by it.

### **Q2: If reported incidents don't give an estimate of how often sexual assault occurs in the military, what kind of metric is used instead?**

A2: To better capture the number of Service members that may have experienced a sexual assault each year, the Department uses an estimate of "prevalence." Past-year prevalence of sexual assault is derived from scientific surveys of the military population to estimate the number of military personnel impacted by the crime in the twelve months prior to being surveyed. For example, in 2018, the Department's scientific survey estimated that 6.2% of active duty women and 0.7% of active duty men experienced some form of sexual assault in the preceding year. Because scientific surveys are conducted to be representative of the entire force, these prevalence rates for men and women indicate that about 20,500 active duty men and women may have experienced a sexual assault in Fiscal Year 2018. The use of scientific survey data to estimate the number of crime victims in a given population is a standard practice throughout government and academia. Only an investigation of the allegations and adjudication of the offense can accurately account for the commission of an offense.

### **Q3: What is the Department doing to prevent sexual assault?**

A3: Our evolving approach to violence prevention has led us to more holistically address the underlying factors that contribute to these readiness detracting behaviors. To this end, in the past two years the Department published an [integrated violence prevention policy](#) and released the [Prevention Plan of Action \(PPoA\)](#).

The DOD Policy on Integrated Primary Prevention of Self-Directed Harm and Prohibited Abuse and Harm (DODI 6400.09) was informed by best-practices in the field to:

- create a unity of effort across prevention programs and policies;
- establish a common, research-based framework for violence prevention; and
- focus prevention efforts on those activities that have the greatest potential to reduce multiple forms of violence that affect the military community.

The PPoA is the DOD's comprehensive approach to building a dedicated prevention system staffed by a trained and empowered workforce in a leadership-supported environment. The Department is currently implementing the PPoA, which uses the latest evidence-based methods to help the Department and the Military Services enhance their prevention capabilities.

To carry out President Biden's direction, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin also ordered several immediate actions and the establishment of an Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC) to address sexual assault and harassment in the military.

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- The immediate actions include: assessing compliance with the PPOA as well as sexual assault policy, including the newest integrated violence prevention policy; conducting evaluations at high risk installations; and establishing a violence prevention workforce.
- The IRC will provide recommendations to improve prevention efforts directed at sexual assault specifically, as well as military climate and culture more broadly.

### **Q4: If SAPRO addresses sexual assault prevention and response, which DoD component addresses sexual harassment?**

A4: The Department's Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) develops policy and conducts oversight regarding sexual harassment prevention and response in the Armed Forces. DoD policy requires that. Leaders at all levels are held appropriately accountable for fostering a climate of inclusion that is free from harassment, as well as retaliation. Each Military Department and the other DOD components must comply with this policy and ensure appropriate resolution of harassment complaints. The Military Departments implement and may augment these policies as appropriate.

### **Q5: What is the Department doing to assist leaders in promoting safe and respectful workplace climates?**

A5: DOD has undertaken several initiatives to address unit climate. One such initiative provides our newest leaders and first-line supervisors with the leadership tools they need to create safe and respectful work environments. This includes the redesigned Defense Organizational Climate Survey 5.0 Force-wide survey. The survey will now establish baselines for select locations and help identify installations and units performing well and those needing improvement. As the Secretary of Defense recently stated, this is a leadership issue. We will lead.

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