



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



*Training Paper*

**Tips for Developing and Delivering Sexual Assault  
Prevention Training to DoD Civilian Employees**

*Prepared by DoD SAPRO 25 April 2022*

**Purpose**

In virtually every section of the Department of Defense, DoD civilian employees can be found in leadership or supporting roles. DoD employs 950,000 civilians, all of whom play an important role in advancing the Department's focus on creating an environment free from the threat of sexual assault. As the Department expands its prevention support and training to Service members, appropriate training for DoD civilian employees needs to be an equally important consideration.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to assist those planning and delivering sexual assault prevention training to DoD civilian employees by identifying relevant sexual assault prevention policies, offering tips for adapting training programs to this population, and highlighting considerations and resources for training civilian employees on prevention. In considering who might use this resource, it is important to note that the position of those involved in such training will vary across the Department. In some cases, the training might be implemented by those identified as the prevention workforce (individuals focusing primarily on prevention of harmful behaviors) who are working in a setting primarily comprised of uniform personnel but with a few civilian employees as well. Or the training lead might support an office primarily staffed by civilian employees, and that individual is responsible for ensuring compliance with all DoD training requirements, not just sexual assault prevention. Regardless of the setting, this paper is intended to help foster the development and delivery of prevention training that is effective and relevant to DoD civilian employees.

Components using this paper and resources identified herein should consult with their respective labor-management relations office to ensure compliance with collective bargaining agreements, as applicable.

**Relevant Sexual Assault Prevention Policies**

The Department policies for civilian employees on the prevention of sexual assault and other forms of violence is found primarily in the following issuances.

- *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training*, DoDI 6495.02, March 28, 2013, requires the Secretaries of the Military Departments to provide SAPR training and education for civilian employees of the military departments in accordance with section 585 of Reference (m).

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<sup>1</sup> The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has focused on the importance of appropriate prevention training for DoD civilian employees. In a 2021 report ("Sexual Harassment and Assault: Guidance Needed to Ensure Consistent Tracking, Response, and Training for DOD Civilians" GAO 21-113, February 2021), the GAO offered recommendations for improving sexual assault training for civilian employees.

- *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Education and Training*, DoDI 6495.02, Volume 2, April 9, 2021, sets out training requirements for persons performing certain prevention and response functions, including civilian employees. In addition to applying to Service members, this issuance includes sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) training requirements for individuals who supervise Service members, and introductory sexual assault prevention for all DoD civilian employees.
- *DoD Policy on Integrated Primary Prevention of Self-Directed Harm and Prohibited Abuse or Harm*, DoDI 6400.09, September 11, 2020, establishes and integrates policies and responsibilities to mitigate self-directed harm and prohibited abusive or harmful acts using a career-cycle perspective to promote enduring force readiness. Per Section 1, 1.1 (Applicability)(b), this DoDI applies to Service members and DoD civilian personnel.<sup>2</sup>
- *DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Policy*, DoDI 1438.06, May 4, 2020, establishes DoD policy and assigns responsibilities for workplace violence prevention and response policy regarding DoD civilian personnel.

These policies are designed to ensure that all within DoD understand what fosters prevention and a healthy climate, such as:

- Healthy relationships (e.g., respectful professional and personal relationships, appropriate boundary setting)
- Responsible alcohol use (e.g., social resistance skills)
- Healthy coping (e.g., problem-solving skills)
- Emotional intelligence (e.g., managing strong emotions in a non-destructive manner, identifying and addressing bias, exhibiting empathy)
- Effective communication (e.g., conflict management, assertive communication of sexual boundaries and consent, bystander intervention)
- Resilience (e.g., mindfulness)

The importance of prevention training was a key focus area of the 2021 Independent Review Commission (IRC). The IRC's report<sup>3</sup> offered several recommendations addressing prevention training (e.g., Recommendations 2.4 and 3.2).

Implementation suggestions for these recommendations stressed the importance of ensuring that content, delivery, and dosage are appropriate for the target audience; be that audience comprised of Service members or civilian employees. These efforts will help refine and strengthen activities the Department has underway to ensure the DoD-wide community has the necessary knowledge and skills to prevent sexual assaults.

**Sample IRC recommendations tied to prevention training:**

- Rec 2.4: Modernize prevention education and skill-building to reflect today's generation of Service members.
- Rec. 3.2: USD(P&R) should direct the Services to educate the force about sexual harassment and sexual assault within the context of the Services' core values

<sup>2</sup> Per Section 1., 1.1 (Applicability) (a), this issuance also applies to OSD, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD (referred to collectively in this issuance as the "DoD Components").

<sup>3</sup> "Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military," July 2, 2021, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jul/02/2002755437/-1/-1/0/IRC-FULL-REPORT-FINAL-1923-7-1-21.PDF/IRC-FULL-REPORT-FINAL-1923-7-1-21.PDF>

### **Tips for Adapting Training Programs for Civilian Employees**

A group of civilian employees may differ in several ways from an audience comprised of Service members. For example, civilian employees may be older, have longer tenure in their positions, have different work settings, and/or have been trained and educated in different pathways or venues; all of which may affect how they receive and apply information delivered through training. That said, in other situations, civilian and uniform personnel are working side-by-side, so having a complete understanding of the work setting is critical.

As a result, it becomes important to consider if and/or how to adapt prevention training so that it aligns with the unique needs and features of a civilian audience. These adaption efforts may involve customizing the existing training content for civilian employees or it may extend to adapting a prevention program which has been shown to be effective elsewhere. A key question guiding the approach selection is “What changes or adaptations might be needed?” If needed at all, some changes might be minor (e.g., replacing photos showing an office setting instead of field exercise) but other potential changes may render the activity ineffective in that new setting. It is important to remember that each setting is unique, so a program that fits well in one setting might not fit as well elsewhere.

When considering adaption of an existing learning activity to use in prevention training, it is critical to maintain its essential (or core) elements because those are what make the activity effective. If these elements are dropped or inappropriately adapted, the outcome might not be as desired. Core elements can address three different issues: What, how, and who.

- The WHAT elements are focused on the key messages, design elements and policy components;
  - E.g., Will the key messages present in the original program resonate with the targeted civilian employee audience?
- The HOW elements are the guiding principles, implementation methods, and/or processes related to implementation; and
  - E.g., Will implementing a program designed for face-to-face delivery be as effective for those working in a virtual office setting?
- The WHO elements look at the characteristics of those implementing the activity.
  - E.g., Does the program “messenger” have the same level of credibility with the targeted civilian employee audience?

Once the essential elements are known, the next steps are to consider if those essential elements need to be adapted and if those adaptations could impact the effectiveness of the program.

Adaptations are often categorized as “green-yellow-red light” adaptations. *(See call-out box)*

The type and complexity of needed adaptations are key considerations when reviewing a potential prevention activity, and should be factors in deciding to either move ahead or look for another prevention activity with a better fit. All adaptations should be undertaken with care, but those which are considered “red-light” adaptations should typically not be undertaken.

It is important to note that factors like the target audience, time available, and office climate, can influence whether a potential adaptation is “green” or “red”. As illustration, if the desire is to adapt an existing Service member program that employs small groups to discuss emotional intelligence, then the climate of the office must support that type of discussion format. If the office climate fosters information exchange and employee engagement, then using this small group format with slight revisions (e.g., changing titles of individuals in scenarios) may be a “green” adaptation. However, if the office climate is negative, employees do not trust each other, and/or employee engagement is not encouraged, then this might be considered a “red” adaptation and should be avoided.

### Program Adaptation Stop Light

**Green-light** adaptations are safe, easy changes that can make a prevention activity better connect with the audience. They do not change the core topics addressed by the prevention activity and do not change what makes a prevention activity effective. (E.g., Modifying examples so situations are familiar to participants)

**Yellow-light** adaptations are more complex and may alter activity content. They should be considered with caution and often require assistance from experts to avoid weakening the activity’s content. (E.g., Delivering lessons virtually instead of in-person as in original design)

**Red-light** adaptations may greatly weaken the prevention activity and generally would not be advised. (E.g., Skipping three lessons in a research-based prevention activity due to limited time).

This example points to the importance of understanding the audience as a key part of planning. Resources such as results of a recent Defense Organizational Climate Survey can provide an organization valuable input into deciding what program adaptation might be successful. Results from surveys, such as the Workplace Gender Relations Survey field by the Office of People Analytics, can offer a DoD-wide perspective on a range of factors affecting prevention, and it may also be possible to access some organizational-level results. Also, understanding the risk and protective factors associated with the target population will help guide program selection and implementation.

### The Office of People Analytics (OPA)

([www.opa.mil](http://www.opa.mil)) offers an extensive variety of research results to help those developing and implementing training for civilian employees. For example, OPA fields a version of the Workplace Gender Relations Survey just for civilian employees. Results of the Service member version of that same survey might be useful in settings where civilians and uniform personnel work together.

Below are illustrations of “green” adaptations which might be considered if adapting a prevention training session for a civilian audience:

Training Topic	Potential “Green” Adaptations for Training Civilian Employees
Healthy relationships (e.g., respectful professional and personal relationships, appropriate boundary setting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depict individuals in civilian clothing rather than uniformed personnel</li> <li>• Feature scenario with civilian correcting co-worker on desired boundaries</li> </ul>
Responsible alcohol use (e.g., social resistance skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depict individuals at social gathering or bar with friends reminding not to drink to excess</li> </ul>
Healthy coping (e.g., problem-solving skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feature scenario with individuals addressing a complex problem facing the office</li> </ul>

Emotional intelligence (e.g., managing strong emotions in a non-destructive manner, identifying and addressing bias, exhibiting empathy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depict office meeting in which leadership seeks input from each team member, regardless of age, gender, military, or civilian status</li> <li>• Feature scenario in which leadership comments on the value of diverse opinion as path to optimal solution</li> </ul>
Effective communication (e.g., conflict management, assertive communication of sexual boundaries and consent, bystander intervention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feature scenario in which a civilian employee steps in to address what appears to be inappropriate behavior toward colleague</li> <li>• Demonstrate 1-on-1 practicing skill of communicating about boundaries</li> </ul>
Resilience (e.g., self-care, mindfulness of self and others)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss appropriate approaches to expressing concern to colleague who is facing challenges</li> <li>• Feature scenario with leadership acknowledging recent heavy workload and encouraging staff to use vacation time, take walk at lunch, “check in” with colleagues who might appear over-stressed, etc.</li> </ul>

### **Considerations and Resources for Training Civilian Employees on Prevention**

Numerous resources are available to help guide the development of training appropriate for adult learners. While some of the content mentioned above is relevant to all, training for civilian employees also needs to have application opportunities directly relevant to their work settings. A key factor in ensuring relevance is to be aware that the “work setting” within DoD can vary significantly (e.g., office vs operational environment or CONUS vs. OCONUS). Keeping in mind these potential unique features of the target audience, the suggestions offered below from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can help guide training plans.

*Extract from:*

### ***How to Captivate and Motivate Adult Learners***

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Nov 2018)

<https://www.cdc.gov/training/development/pdfs/design/adult-learning-guide-508.pdf>

**They need to know why this training matters to them.**

At the beginning of your class, adult learners need to know how the training is relevant to them and how it will benefit them. If they know what's in it for them right away, they are far more likely to pay attention and participate.

**They need to be able to see how they can use what they are learning now.**

They want to be able to use their new knowledge right away. By including real-life examples such as case studies and stories, you can help learners see how they can apply what they are learning in real public health situations they might encounter on the job.

**They need the chance to practice their skills in class.**

Adult learners thrive when they can practice what they're learning right away. This can boost their confidence and their ability to retain new knowledge and skills. You can also help them see how what you're teaching is relevant to them.

**They will learn better when you use a variety of techniques to present your training.**

Adults learn better when they are engaged, and you have so many different techniques to choose from, beyond just lecturing.

**They want to share their experiences—with you and with each other.**

Whether you ask them to share their perspectives with the entire group or give them opportunities to break into smaller groups, you are engaging them and getting them excited about what they are learning.

**They need to feel respected.**

Respect and embrace the cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values of adult learners. Take cultural diversity into account when you deliver your training—for example, make sure your learning activities are sensitive to cultural differences among adult learners in your class. By doing so, you can create a learning environment that fosters cultural sensitivity and produces engaged learners.

**They need to hear key concepts repeated.**

Adult learners need to hear things more than once to remember them. When you introduce new activities, be sure to incorporate information you presented earlier to add context to the new content. Then review key concepts again to help them retain them.

Resources exist across DoD to help with prevention training. For example, as noted earlier, knowing how to recognize and foster healthy relationships is a key aspect of prevention training. Recognizing this, DoD supported the development of a report titled “Healthy Relationship Approaches to Sexual Assault Prevention”.<sup>4</sup>

This resource and many other related materials can be found on SPARX Connection, DoD's online prevention community of practice. Depending on the need, members can access a range of resources grouped into the following categories:

1. Policy, Guidance, and Training
2. Reports, Research, and Programs
3. Tools and Resources
4. Webinars

Housed on DoD's All Partner Access Network (APAN), SPARX Connection is open to those with a “.mil” email address. (See instructions to the right on how to join.)



***To become a member:***

1. Join APAN at [www.apan.org](http://www.apan.org).
2. Once on APAN, search for “SPARX Connection” and ask to join.

<sup>4</sup> Healthy Relationship Approaches to Sexual Assault Prevention: Programs and Strategies for Use Within the U.S. Military, RAND Report 4241, May 2021, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR4241.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4241.html)