



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



**PRESS RELEASE: DOD LAUNCHES *STEP FORWARD* CAMPAIGN
DURING NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION
MONTH**

APRIL 11, 2022

As part of National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM), the Department of Defense (DOD) launches its *STEP FORWARD* campaign. This year's theme, "*STEP FORWARD. Prevent. Report. Advocate.*" is a call to action for everyone in the Department to do their part to prevent sexual assault and encourage greater assistance seeking.

Commemorated every April by both civilian and military communities, DOD observes Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month to emphasize the link between military readiness and healthy unit climate. Over a decade of research demonstrates that sexual assault occurs less often in units where members support and respect each other. Data further shows that sticking up for someone who is being hazed, bullied, harassed or abused sends a strong message that helps improve climates.

"We are all very different people that come together in the service of our country. The *STEP FORWARD* campaign recognizes that each of us in the military community can take action to make our units safer," said Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office Acting Director Dr. Nate Galbreath. "Prevention starts with recognizing that our day to day interactions, when respectful, can snowball into making the military a great place to work and live."

Elizabeth Foster, Executive Director, Office of Force Resiliency said, "We are laser focused on change that benefits our people and our military's effectiveness. The destructive impact of a sexual assault is felt at the individual level and beyond, and threatens the readiness of our troops. I ask every member of our DOD community to support the *STEP FORWARD* campaign. Make it your business to encourage acts that help prevent sexual assault, increase reporting, and advocate for a safer, respectful workplace. Our mission demands it."

If you or someone you know in the DoD community has experienced sexual assault, please consider reaching out to DoD Safe Helpline for 24/7, anonymous, one-on-one support at 877-995-5247 or SafeHelpline.org/live-chat.

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