

Leaders Resources

As a leader, you may encounter a situation where there is a sexual assault in your unit. Knowing how to respond swiftly, appropriately, and sensitively is important in order to protect the survivor and ensure a positive and cohesive command climate is maintained. Below is some information and additional resources that you may find helpful in navigating sexual assault in your unit.

Command Leadership Responsibilities

Per DoD policy, there are requirements that must be met to ensure the health and safety of survivors and to maintain unit cohesion through a positive command climate, if sexual assault occurs or is reported at your unit. [DoDI 6495.02](#) outlines in detail Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Procedures for the Department. Additionally, each Service and NGB has a policy on sexual assault. Links to Service and NGB specific policy, guidance, and resources can be found below. For additional information, you can also contact your local Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC).

Service members have two reporting options: [Restricted and Unrestricted](#). If a Service member discloses a sexual assault to law enforcement and/or previously elected to make an Unrestricted Report by signing a DD Form 2910 on the same sexual assault incident they are not eligible to make a Restricted Report. DoD SAPRO outlines the process for both reporting options in a step-by-step guide. This guide contains important information on how to maintain a survivor's safety and privacy throughout the reporting process. You can access the guide [Victim Reporting Options Guide.pdf \(sapr.mil\)](#) here.

Survivors of sexual assault shall be protected from coercion, retaliation, and reprisal in accordance with DoDI [6495.02](#). Retaliation can unjustly harm the lives and careers of survivors, bystanders, and responders. Retaliation has no place in the military and you must do your part to ensure an ethical and just command intolerant of such behavior. For more information about retaliation, including reporting resources for survivors go to [Resources \(marines.mil\)](#).

To help ensure a comprehensive and appropriate response, DoD SAPRO has compiled a checklist of what should happen within the first 30 days of a survivor's disclosure of sexual assault. You can access the checklist [Commanders 30 Day Checklist | SAPR](#) here.

Throughout the military investigative and justice process, Service members who make an Unrestricted Report of sexual assault are entitled to certain rights. To learn more about these rights, please go to [Victims' Bill of Rights | SAPR](#).

Tips on How to Talk to a Survivor

Knowing what to say after a survivor has disclosed an assault can be difficult. While there is no one "right" thing to say to a survivor, an empathetic response to their disclosure is crucial. Here are some responses to let a survivor know that you support them:

"I'm so sorry this happened to you." Showing a survivor empathy can build rapport and trust between you and the survivor.

"I'm here to help you get support." A survivor trusted you and shared what happened to them. Let them know that you are there to ensure their safety and will respect their privacy.

"How can I help?" Let the survivor know that you are there for them. Ask them how you can help can put decisions into their hands and help them feel more in control about what is happening. However, it is also important to be clear about your role, any limitations you may have, and other avenues of support available to them.

This is not a comprehensive list of what you can say to a survivor to show empathy. Commanders can find tips on what to say and what not to say to survivors of sexual violence in the Safe Helpline self-paced course, *How to Support a Survivor*, or by reviewing the information on this [webpage](#).

What is Safe Helpline?

Established in 2011, Safe Helpline is the Department of Defense's (DoD) sole hotline for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. Safe Helpline is a completely anonymous, confidential, 24/7, specialized service—providing help and information anytime, anywhere. A Safe Helpline user can access one-on-one support, peer-to-peer support, information, resources, and self-care exercises 24/7 to aid in their [recovery](#).

How Safe Helpline Can Support You and Your Unit

Telephone Helpline

Our highly trained Safe Helpline staff are available to answer your questions, provide resources and get you contact information for a variety of on-base and off-base resources. You can connect with a staff member by calling 877-995-5247.

Online Helpline

The Online Helpline, an anonymous online platform, provides the same services as the Telephone Helpline described above. You can access the anonymous Online Helpline 24/7 by logging on to our website at safehelpline.org or connecting through the [Safe Helpline app](#).

Marine Corps Resources

- [Inspectors General Checklist SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM \(SAPR\) \(1752\)](#)
- [Sexual Assault Prevention and Response \(SAPR\) Program Guidance](#)