



# **Evaluation of Pre-Command Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training**

**Report to the Secretary of Defense**

**Prepared by the Department of Defense Sexual Assault  
Prevention and Response Office**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the direction of the Secretary of Defense, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) assessed pre-command Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) training to identify strengths and areas for improvement. DoD SAPRO visited pre-command training conducted by the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps and reviewed Army's newly developed Sexual Harassment / Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program training support package for pre-command training that will be deployed in Summer 2012. DoD SAPRO training experts and subject matter experts evaluated both the method of delivery of SAPR training, as well as the content of the training, to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This report contains the DoD SAPRO Training Evaluation Team's findings and recommendations to the Secretary of Defense.

The Evaluation Team identified a number of practices the Military Services should continue in their SAPR training for commanders:

1. **SAPR training is integrated into the Services' pre-command and senior enlisted advisor courses.**
2. **Some SAPR messages were consistently presented.**
3. **Senior Service leaders' support is presented during the training.**
4. **SAPR expert instructors lead the training sessions.**
5. **A Commander's Guide to SAPR provides a useful toolset that all commanders should receive.**
6. **Practical exercises provide an opportunity to apply learning that should be expanded to all commanders' SAPR training.**

The Evaluation Team also developed a number of recommendations that are designed to build on the successful practices the Military Services have already put into place, will drive improvements in SAPR training for commanders, and support the strategic goals of the Department's SAPR program:

1. **Employ a standardized curriculum across all four Military Services.** There are core program competencies for commanders that do not vary by Military Service. These training topics should be presented consistently and uniformly across the Department. However, each Military Service should be free to supplement the core competencies with Military Service-specific information.
2. **Add quality instructional time to adequately address the SAPR program.** Recommended SAPR course length for commanders is at least two hours.
3. **Expand the use of active learning techniques.** Additional class time should be used for guided small-group discussions and case studies. The Military Services should severely restrict or discontinue the use of slide-based training.
4. **Provide more commander take-away tools.** A standardized set of commander tools would ensure all commanders have a reference with tips on developing unit policies and approaches that prevent sexual assaults, encourage victim reporting, ensure victim assistance, and hold offenders appropriately accountable.

5. **Gather data on learning and training effectiveness.** Assess participants to ensure they have understood and mastered the key SAPR concepts and skills for commanders and senior enlisted advisors. These metrics should become a regular component of each Military Service's Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military.
6. **Expand training to capture key tasks for commanders.** Although ensuring all participants have a good foundation in the basics is important, leaders need advanced knowledge if they are to champion the SAPR program in the field. Providing commanders with clear, concise recommendations for use in the field should become a central focus of training.
7. **Discontinue panel presentations as a sole means of SAPR training.** Panel discussions do not provide sufficient time to address the required topics for commanders.

The Recommendations section of this report suggests specific next steps to put these recommendations into action.

## BACKGROUND AND REQUIREMENT

The Department of Defense (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) was established in 2005 to be the single point of responsibility for policy matters related to sexual assault in the military. Although the Department established a variety of training requirements in DoD Instruction 6495.02, multiple internal and external reviews of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) training in the Military Services have identified such training lacks standardized content, is delivered inconsistently, and is missing an evaluation of effectiveness.

On January 18, 2012, the Secretary of Defense directed an assessment of SAPR training provided by the Military Services to officers selected for command and for senior enlisted leaders to identify strengths and areas for improvement be completed within 120 days.

The assessment purpose was to evaluate commander training provided by the Military Services to O-4 through O-7 officers prior to the assumption of command. For senior enlisted leaders, training was defined as that training provided to Command Sergeant Majors, Command Master Chief Petty Officers, and Command Chief Master Sergeants (or equivalent E-9 positions) prior to their assumption of the role of senior enlisted advisor (or equivalent), starting at the battalion and squadron level through brigade, installation, and wing (or equivalent) level.

Due to the short suspense of this tasking, DoD SAPRO recommends that this evaluation be viewed as a rapid discovery, or snapshot, of the Military Services' pre-command training in advance of a more thorough top-to-bottom evaluation of all SAPR training, to be accompanied by development of a standardized SAPR training curriculum.

## APPROACH

The Evaluation Team employed a four-step methodology to accomplish the objectives of this task, starting with an environmental scan of pre-command training and the development of data collection instruments. The Team then visited the Military Services' pre-command training programs, whenever possible, to observe the pre-command SAPR training and review the training materials. After analyzing the data collected from these observations, the Evaluation Team developed a set of recommendations for improvement of the pre-command SAPR training provided by the Military Services.

A more detailed overview of the methodology is provided in Appendix A.

## FINDINGS

### STRENGTHS OF CURRENT SAPR TRAINING FOR COMMANDERS

1. **SAPR training is integrated into the Services' pre-command and senior enlisted advisor courses.** The Military Services have made provisions for SAPR training that is integrated into the pre-command preparation for commanders and senior enlisted advisors, as required in DoD Instruction 6495.01.
2. **Certain SAPR messages were consistently presented.**
  - a) Set the right command climate or tone
  - b) Select the right people for the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) and SAPR Victim Advocate (VA) roles
  - c) Improper handling of a report can destroy command climate and discourage future reporting
  - d) Sexual assault is an underreported crime
  - e) Substance and alcohol use increases a potential offender's opportunity for sexual assault
  - f) Sexual assaults in the military most often occur between people that know each other
  - g) Commanders refer cases to appropriate offices for investigations
  - h) Definitions of major program elements (e.g. restricted versus unrestricted reports)
3. **Senior Service leaders' support is presented during the training.** Most pre-command SAPR training sessions involve in-person or video messages from a Military Service Chief or other senior Military Service leader about the importance and urgency of the issue and leaders' expectations of subordinate commanders' performance.
4. **SAPR expert instructors lead the training sessions.** The SAPR training provided to commanders and senior enlisted advisors was universally presented by expert instructors who knew the SAPR program and could answer questions about commanders' responsibilities for the SAPR program.
5. **A Commander's Guide to SAPR provides a useful toolset that all commanders should receive.** Most Military Services supplemented SAPR training with a recently published Commander's Guide to SAPR for reference. If integrated into training, these guides could become invaluable tools in the field for commanders and other leaders.
6. **Practical exercises provide an opportunity to apply learning that should be expanded to all commanders' SAPR training.** Some of the Military Services included practical scenarios that required participants to apply and discuss what they learn about the SAPR program. These "applied learning" opportunities hold great promise for reinforcing understanding and recall of key SAPR program components.

## How SAPR TRAINING CAN BE IMPROVED

1. **Employ a standardized curriculum across all four Military Services.** Each of the Military Services' training content varied widely. Given the Department-wide focus of the SAPR program, there are core program competencies for commanders that do not vary by Military Service. These training topics should be presented consistently and uniformly across the Services. However, each Military Service should be free to supplement the core competencies with Military Service-specific information. Certain required SAPR messages and content were often missing:
  - a) Male-on-male assault statistics
  - b) Checklist of what a commander or senior enlisted advisor needs to do to execute their SAPR responsibilities
  - c) Impact of sexual assault on mission readiness
  - d) Victim perspective and the impact of trauma on behavior
  - e) Chaplain role and "privilege" definition
  - f) Health providers' role
  - g) Clarifying the difference between a "false report" versus insufficient evidence of an offense
  - h) Detailed recommendations for setting the proper command climate
2. **Add quality instructional time to expand SAPR learning.** Observed SAPR training programs varied from ten minutes in length to over two hours. The longer programs used the increased time to efficiently communicate a greater amount of information. In order to provide time for participants to be actively engaged in learning SAPR concepts and skills and how to apply them as commanders, pre-command SAPR training modules should at a minimum be two hours and combine a presentation with practical exercises. This longer course is the recommended length to adequately address the required learning objectives.
3. **Expand the use of active learning techniques.** Participants learn best in an environment that incorporates adult learning theory, which includes interaction, application of concepts, and group participation. Commanders should be actively engaged in learning SAPR concepts and skills, and challenged with scenarios that allow them to apply their learning. Read-ahead publications, guided small-group discussions, short video presentations, and case studies should comprise most SAPR training. The Military Services should severely restrict or discontinue the use of slide-based training.
4. **Provide more commander take-away tools.** Each Military Service provides commanders handouts and take-away materials from training sessions. A standardized set of commander tools would ensure all commanders have a reference with tips on developing unit policies and approaches that prevent sexual assaults, encourage victim reporting, ensure victim assistance, and hold offenders appropriately accountable.
5. **Gather data on learning and training effectiveness.** Assessing participants to ensure they understand and master the key SAPR concepts and skills for commanders and senior enlisted advisors is an important step in validating training effectiveness. These metrics should become a regular component of each Military Service's Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military.
6. **Expand training to capture key tasks for commanders.** Much of the observed training covered SAPR program basic concepts. Although ensuring all participants have

a good foundation in the basics is important, leaders need advanced knowledge if they are to champion the SAPR program in the field. For example, all observed training discussed the importance of setting the “correct tone” or “command climate” within a unit. However, none of the training provided detailed recommendations for how commanders set the “correct tone”. Providing commanders with clear, concise recommendations for use in the field should become a central focus of training.

- 7. Discontinue panel presentations as a sole means of SAPR training.** Two of the observed classes employed short SAPR presentations as part of a panel on personnel topics (e.g. Suicide Prevention, Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention, Equal Opportunity, Family Advocacy Program, and Combat Stress Reduction). While panel presentations can be effective when presenters emphasize a common theme or approach shared by the different topics, none of the observed panel presentations were so integrated. Instead, each topic area presented a very short program description followed by a panel question and answer session. Sexual assault is a difficult topic to discuss. As a result, most questions posed by participants to panel members focused on the other programs presented.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Secretary of Defense should:
  - a. Direct Under Secretary of Defense (USD) for Personnel and Readiness (P&R) to develop standardized core competencies, learning objectives, and supporting training materials to be used in all pre-command and senior enlisted advisor SAPR training.
  - b. Direct USD (P&R) to develop methods and requirements for learning assessments, certification, and outcome reporting for Service Pre-Command training.
2. The Secretary of Defense should direct the Secretaries of the Military Departments to:
  - a. Continue Military Service Secretaries' and Chiefs' emphasis and support of SAPR training for commanders. Military Service Chiefs' emphasis on the SAPR program remains an indispensable means to communicate the urgency of the problem and their expectations for commanders.
  - b. Provide a minimum of two hours of instruction dedicated to SAPR programming for commanders and senior enlisted personnel, allowing for adequate time for small group discussion and practical exercises that involve working on case studies with SAPR experts, experienced commanders, and peers on how to execute SAPR responsibilities and champion the program. The SAPR training modules must focus class time on hands-on, scenario-based learning to allow for coverage of required topics, skill practice, and answering commanders' questions.
  - c. Ensure training content incorporates at a minimum the training subjects required by DoD Instruction 6495.01 and the core competencies, learning objectives and materials developed by USD (P&R).
  - d. Submit the new or revised SAPR training programs, or SAPR training components, for pre-command to the USD (P&R) for policy review prior to implementation, to ensure that all Services are in compliance DoD SAPR training standards.
  - e. Provide SAPR program information and guidance for commanders in a take-away "Commander's Guide" to allow more time in class for active participation and learning. Commander's Guides should be designed to be a complete set of documentation for commanders on their responsibilities in the SAPR program. The Guide should contain the following:
    - i. Standardized commander checklists for responding to both victims and subjects of sexual assault investigations.
    - ii. Key messages and recommendations for how to set the appropriate command tone within a unit and champion the SAPR program.
    - iii. Wallet cards with basic Service SAPR resources (e.g., local contact information, key SAPR program concepts, links to more information, etc.)
    - iv. Website links to key DoD and Service resources

The Guide should also be available in an electronic version available for download from SAPR websites and a mobile version for access on smartphones.

- d. Require commanders and senior enlisted advisors to take a learning assessment developed by USD (P&R) in coordination with the Service Secretaries and Chiefs, to identify commander and senior enlisted growth in knowledge and skills to ensure key messages were retained and to provide a baseline for improvement of the training program. Once the assessment methodology has been determined, assessment results will be incorporated into the Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military.
- e. Provide one-time Commanders refresher training to sustain skills and knowledge.

## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The following is a detailed overview of each step in the methodology the DoD SAPRO Evaluation Team employed to accomplish this training assessment Directive from the Secretary of Defense.

### 1. Perform environmental scan of existing training and develop evaluation instruments

The evaluation team informed the Military Services of the training evaluation Directive from the Secretary of Defense and requested information on the pre-command SAPR training of each Military Service. In a data call sent to Military Services, SAPRO requested that no later than February 22, 2012 each Military Service validate the schools and courses identified by DoD SAPRO, correct any errors, add additional courses needed, and provide additional data about the courses. DoD SAPRO also requested each Military Service submit lesson plans, briefing decks, and other materials for these courses no later than March 2, 2012.

Evaluators planned to observe at least one commander training and one senior noncommissioned officer (NCO) training for each of the Military Services; however, this was not possible within the amount of time allotted due to the Military Services' training schedules, which are determined months in advance.

To collect data during the observations, the DoD SAPRO Evaluation Team developed two instruments: the Course Observation Rating Form and Course Materials Rating Form (provided at Appendix B) and accompanying procedures were created to ensure consistent and thorough reviews would be performed by each evaluator. Criteria were developed based on training standards required in the DoD Instructional Systems Development/Systems Approach to Training (MIL-HDBK-29612)2A.

### 2. Data Collection

Teams of military training experts and SAPR Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) were deployed to perform reviews of each course session offered during the timeframe for this Directive (February through May 2012). Evaluations focused on instructor effectiveness, teaching and learning strategy, course materials and contents, evaluation and course follow-up, and class environment. The evaluators noted best practices, strengths, and weaknesses of the training delivery sessions to identify opportunities for improvement. The DoD SAPRO Evaluation Team validated observations and ratings among multiple observers and compiled their ratings into an overall score for each training course. This score was one of several factors considered by the team in its overall review of pre-command training.

The DoD SAPRO Evaluation Team observed the SAPR training presented at 7 sites to approximately 390 participants. In addition, the team reviewed materials for a 3-hour course currently under development by the Army.

<b>Pre-Command SAPR Training Evaluation – Site Visits</b>		
<b>Course Title and Location</b>	<b>Training Delivery Date and Number of Participants</b>	<b>Organizations Involved in Evaluation</b>
Marine Corps – 1 <sup>st</sup> Sergeants Quantico, VA	8 March 100 Participants*	DoD SAPRO USMC SAPR Program
Marine Corps – Commanders Quantico, VA	22 March 50 Participants*	DoD SAPRO USMC SAPR Program
Navy – Command Leadership Newport, RI	26-27 March 40 Participants*	DoD SAPRO DoN SAPR Program
Navy – Chief of the Boat Newport, RI	26-27 March 20 Participants*	DoD SAPRO DoN SAPR Program
Air Force – Air University Group and Wing Commanders Montgomery, AL	29 March 30 Wing Commander 75 Group Commander Participants*	DoD SAPRO
Air Force – Air Education and Training Command San Antonio, TX	29 March 55 Participants*	DoD SAPRO
Army – Sexual Harassment / Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program (solely course materials)**	10 April scheduled for deployment in August 2012	DoD SAPRO
Air Force – Air Space Command Squadron Peterson  Colorado Springs, CO	7 May 30 Participants*	DoD SAPRO Air Force SAPR Program

\*Numbers of course attendees are approximate for each course listed.

\*\* Currently, General Raymond Odierno presents an Army senior leader's message about SHARP at the pre-command training at Ft. Leavenworth. There is currently no formal SHARP component in the Army pre-command course, despite a specific requirement identified in Army Regulation 135-1. SAPRO reviewed a proposed SHARP Training Support Package (TSP) which is reportedly scheduled for deployment in August 2012.

### **3. Data Analysis**

The Evaluation Team conducted basic statistical analyses (mean and standard deviation) of the course scores but did not observe significant differences or trends. The team then reviewed all eight observers' comments for dominant themes and grouped comments by course strengths and areas for improvement. The team then synthesized comments from each of these two groups into statements of findings.

### **4. Development of Recommendations**

Based on the findings detailed in the section above, the Evaluation Team developed recommendations for what the Military Services should do to strengthen training of commanders and senior enlisted advisors in two subject areas: training delivery (instructor effectiveness, teaching and learning strategy, evaluation and follow-up, and classroom environment) and training content (course materials and content).