



DoD Safe Helpline

The First Step on the Path to Reporting and Accessing Services

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Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO)

Objectives

- Objective 1: Identify the benefits of Safe Helpline to local SAPR service providers and as a valuable resource to survivors.
- Objective 2: Explain how the unique services available on the Safe Helpline meet the needs of survivors.
- Objective 3: Differentiate between anonymity and confidentiality and list the benefits of each as well as describe the protective technology and protocols in place to ensure their protections.
- Objective 4: Demonstrate an understanding of sexual assault hotline disclosures
- Objective 5: Assess the benefits to survivors and service providers of the most recent initiatives available through Safe Helpline.

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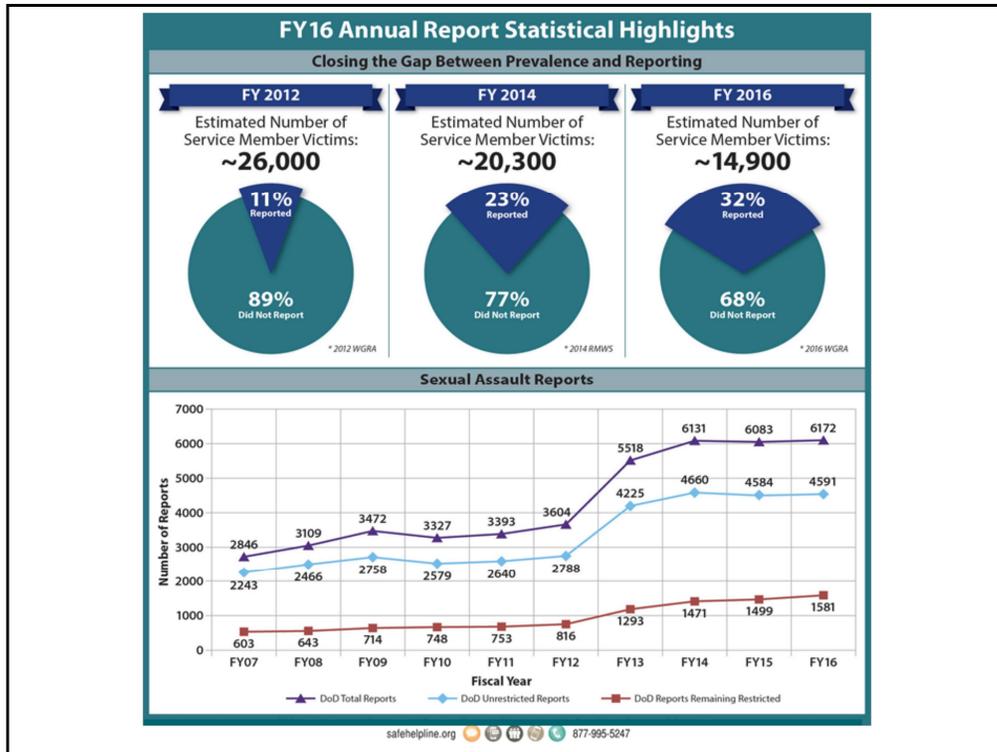
These are the objectives that we will be teaching to today. Our goal is for everyone to leave here today having learned something new about Safe Helpline.

Agenda

- Sexual Assault in the Military
- What is Safe Helpline?
- How does Safe Helpline Provide Support?
- Who Uses Safe Helpline?
- What's Next for Safe Helpline?
- Questions

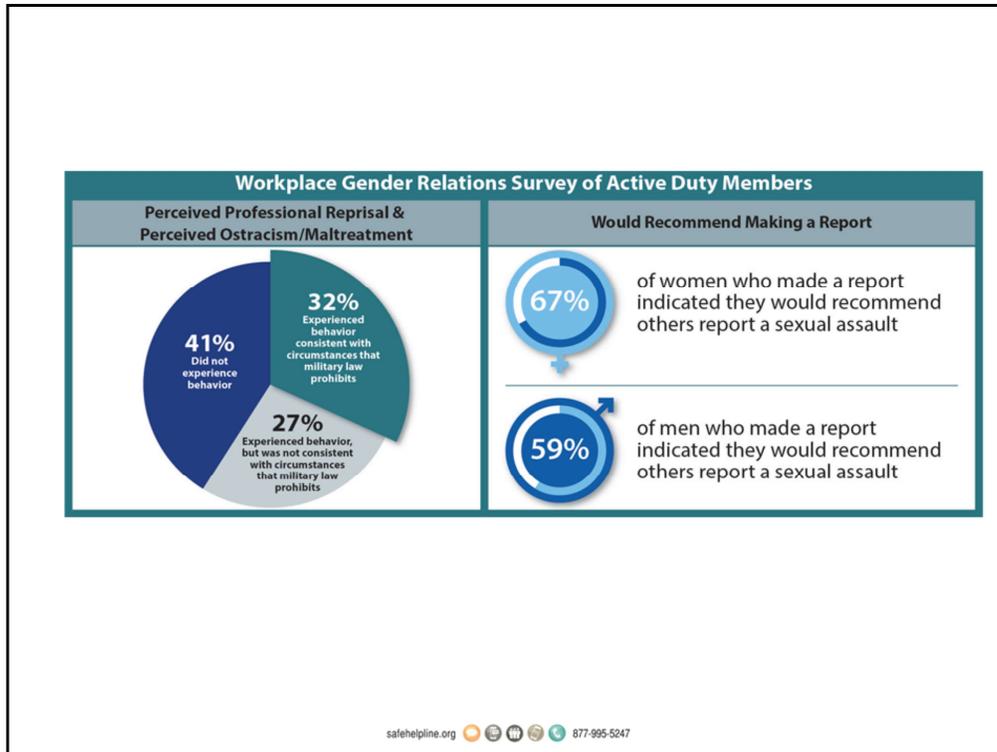
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These are the topics we will be walking through in today's sessions.



To help us understand the value and role of the Safe Helpline, it is important to understand sexual assault in the military

- As you can see, we have made great strides over time in improving reporting rates while decreasing prevalence. But, progress is not success.
- However as we still have more than 2/3 of victims not reporting, we must provide alternative avenues for these more than 10,000 individuals to access care, information and support in a way that meets them where they are.
- That is where the Safe Helpline’s anonymous support can be crucial and illustrates how we support and augment the work of the Services’ existing SAPR programs.



- DoD SAPRO strives to meet the needs of victims by constantly evolving and growing the support services available through the Safe Helpline.
- We utilize feedback from SARCs as well as victims to inform Safe Helpline and other SAPR Program developments
- For example, two areas that are of particular focus for DoD SAPRO are survivors who experience Reprisal/Ostracism/Maltreatment and Military men who have experienced sexual assault
- These two areas of focus have informed several new Safe Helpline initiatives that we will discuss today (retaliation reporting and Men’s SHR sessions) and illustrates how Safe Helpline services are informed by the data we collect

What is DoD Safe Helpline?

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Hopefully you are all at least a little bit knowledgeable about the Safe Helpline and the services we provide. Our hope is that everyone one leave here today with some new information that they learned about what we do!

In 2011, SAPRO contracted with RAINN to create the Safe Helpline.

Safe Helpline provides a **confidential, anonymous, and secure** place for survivors, their loved ones, and stakeholders in the DoD community to get support and information 24/7.



RAINN

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As part of the DoD's commitment to providing care and support to sexual assault victims, DoD SAPRO contracted with RAINN in 2011 to launch the Safe Helpline. Since then, we have continued to grow and develop to meet the needs of victims, and support the work of SAPR professionals in the field.

What is DoD SAPRO?

Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (DoD SAPRO) is responsible for the policy and oversight of the Department's sexual assault prevention and response program. SAPRO works hand-in-hand with the Services and the civilian community to develop and implement innovative prevention and response programs.

What is RAINN?

RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline, 800.656.HOPE, in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers and the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline at online.rainn.org – the nation's first secure, online crisis intervention service. RAINN also carries out national programs to educate the public and advocate for victims through effective policy.

Survivors Come to Safe Helpline for a Variety of Reasons.

I don't know what happened to me.

How do I find a therapist?

Who is my SARC?

I can't sleep.

I want to tell my partner but I don't know how.

I need a lawyer.

I just need to talk to someone.

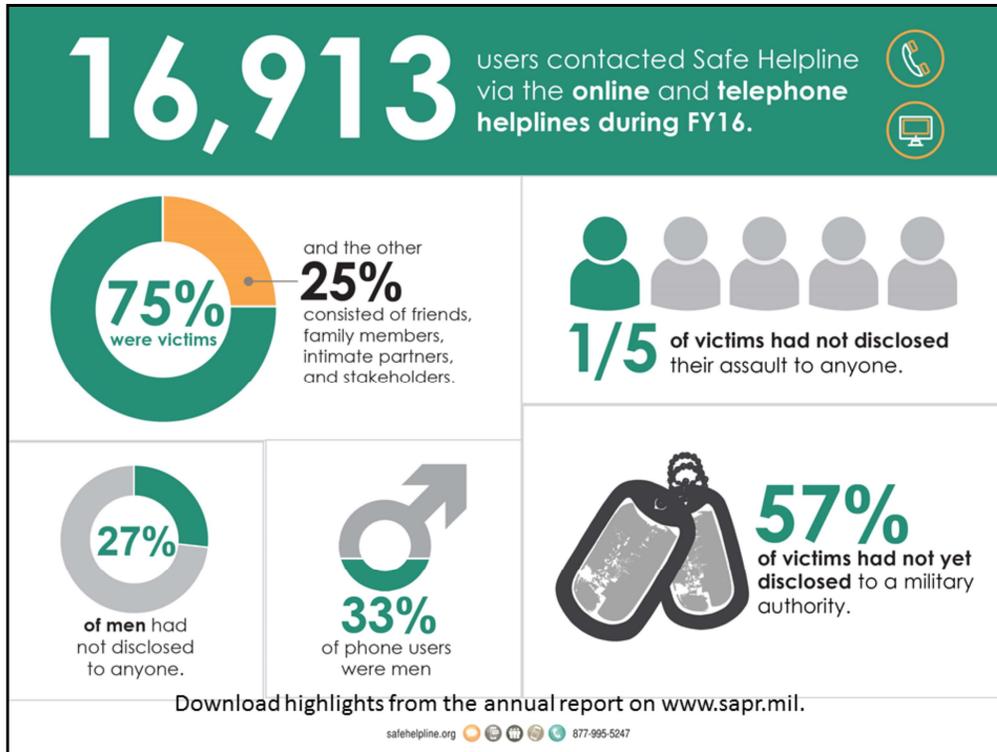
I don't know what to do next.

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Individuals (Survivors, loved ones, colleagues, stakeholders) come to Safe Helpline for a variety of reasons and at all different places in their healing journey.

- Some come to Safe Helpline still questioning what happened to them.
- Some come just looking for someone to talk to.
- Some are asking for specific resources and want clarification on how to go about getting help or reaching out to a loved one.
- Some come to Safe Helpline ready to take that next step and move forward with the process.

Our goal at Safe Helpline is to provide support and resources that can help an individual at any point in their healing journey. We also have the tools and resources to help support friends, family members, colleagues, commanders, and stakeholders in their efforts to learn more and better support the survivors in their lives.



- This slides shares some information about what we know about Safe Helpline users. All of the information here and more can be found in the published FY16 Safe Helpline annual report on the sapr.mil website. Look for Appendix G for the Safe Helpline specific information.
- Of particular note is that 1/3 of phone users were men, which speaks to the importance of having an anonymous source of information and support available for this population.
- Also important is that almost 2/3 of all SHL users had not yet reported to a military authority, which provides the opportunity for Safe Helpline to serve as an ‘on-ramp’ for victims to get information and support in a manner that meets their needs, with the hope of ultimately connecting them back to their local SAPR Programs to make a report, if/when they are ready

How Does Safe Helpline Provide Support?

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We're going to talk about the specific support that Safe Helpline can provide help to these individuals in two ways.

First, we're going to describe the ways that our staff support individuals who come to Safe Helpline. What are we doing for the folks that come to Safe Helpline based on their needs? With this we've identified a few scenarios to give you a detailed look at why someone comes to Safe Helpline and on the screen you'll see what a response would look like from our staff.

Second, we'll go over the tools and resources we've created using existing technology to provide multiple avenues for someone to get help and information.

Listen and Show Empathy

"I can tell it took a lot of courage for you to reach out to us today. You **don't deserve to be treated this way** by others in your unit. They should be there to support you, not hurt you. It sounds like this has been a really difficult transition for you."

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Survivors often come to Safe Helpline as an opportunity to share their experience and receive validation and support in a completely anonymous space.

SAFE HELPLINE CASE EXAMPLE: An Active duty male visitor came to the Safe Helpline online chat. He told us he wasn't comfortable talking over the phone because he didn't want to be overheard. He started describing what many would call a gang rape or a multi-perpetrator assault but instead of using those words he talked about it as "hazing by others in his new unit." He was embarrassed that he wasn't able to stop it from happening, especially with the training he had gone through to be in the military. He said multiple times that "he should have been stronger than this, he should have been able to stop it."

As you all know the first step to supporting a victim, especially if this is their first time disclosing an assault, is to build trust. Without that trust, a survivor is more likely to shut down and less likely to utilize additional services. Our goal at Safe Helpline is to create a space for survivors to feel heard and safe so they can open up and begin the healing process.

Psychoeducation about Sexual Assault and Consent

"I want you to know that **this wasn't your fault**. When experiencing something traumatic, it is a normal response to freeze when you think you would fight back, even when you've been combat trained. I also want you to know that just because your body responded to the assault, **it doesn't mean it was okay**. Your body and brain don't react in the same way. It does not mean you wanted it to happen."

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Individuals often come to Safe Helpline to learn more about sexual assault and consent. Survivors may be looking for ways to understand what happened to them, while friends/family may be looking for ways to understand and support a survivor in their lives.

SAFE HELPLINE CASE EXAMPLE: A Reservist called the Telephone Helpline and explained that she has been assaulted during a recent training exercise. When talking about the assault she continued to blame herself for letting it happen. She also mentioned that the perpetrator used the phrase "You must have wanted it," because of how her body reacted. She is having a hard time coping, specifically when trying to understand her body's reaction to the assault.

For these survivors our goal is to help normalize their feelings and help them understand that others may also experience these types of reactions and that they are not alone. In this situation, we provided the caller with some information on the effects of sexual assault and the neurobiology of trauma. We also have an extensive resource database of books, other websites, apps, support techniques and information that we can share with them so they can also educate themselves after they have left the Safe Helpline.

"I want you to know that this wasn't your fault. When experiencing something

traumatic, it is a normal response to freeze when you think you would fight back, even when you've been combat trained. I also want you to know that just because your body responded to the assault, it does not mean it was okay. Your body and brain don't react in the same way. It does not mean you wanted it to happen."

QUESTION FOR GROUP:

What type of information do you think a victim may be looking for? Do you think victims always come knowing what they need?

Brainstorm and Roleplay Scenarios

Visitor: Nothing's ever happened to make me think she would react badly but I am scared of losing her or having her lose trust in me.

Staffer: "That makes sense, I can see where you are coming from. It sounds like you really care about her and that she could be a good source of support for you. Do you think it would be helpful to work through how to tell her this happened?"

Visitor: Yeah, I think that would be helpful

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For some visitors, Safe Helpline is a space to talk through their specific concerns and interactions. This can mean they are looking for ways to open up to a loved one or creating a safety plan.

SAFE HELPLINE CASE EXAMPLE: A newly married Male survivor contacted us needing some guidance. He had experienced sexual abuse prior to joining the military and prior to being married and over the years had gone through the time he needed for his coping process. He felt he was finally ready to tell his wife and wanted to have the conversation before he left on his first deployment, but he was scared and not sure how to go about it. He talked about all of her possible reactions that had been running through his mind: *What if she doesn't believe me? Will she be mad I waited so long to tell her? Will she be embarrassed of me?*

For this visitor, our staff was able to validate his concerns and role play with him to help him feel comfortable approaching his wife. These situations would look different for every individual Safe Helpline user because we are working with them through their specific concerns.

Next Steps and Resources

"I am glad you are reaching back out. It takes a lot of strength and courage to do what you are doing. Your SARC can talk you through the reporting process. Would you like me to help you connect to them?"

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For many survivors that come to Safe Helpline, they are already ready to take that next step. They are looking to get connected to resources on base or in the local community.

When speaking with a survivor that had been assaulted during basic training, they mention that they were finally ready to talk to a professional about what happened to them. During a previous interaction with Safe Helpline they had received information on some resources, and now felt comfortable reaching out. They were moving to a new duty station and wanted information on resources in that area and wanted to talk to someone about their reporting options.

For these survivors we have an extensive database that consists of all of the military responders (SARC/VA, Chaplain, Legal, Medical/Mental healthcare professionals, and military police) and RAINN's complete list of affiliated sexual assault service providers in the country. If they are 100% ready to connect, we can even do a warm handoff to make the process as seamless as possible for the survivor. The SARC or VA (Victim Advocate) is almost always the first person we would refer to because they are a confidential resource that will conduct both types of reporting options for the visitor. We have had folks that come to Safe Helpline that do not want to connect with a SARC for any number of reasons (they know that their SARC knows the perpetrator, they don't want to talk to anyone on base,

etc.) so in those cases we can provide information for any of the other services in our database.

Ways to Access Safe Helpline

Online Helpline and Telephone Helpline

Safe HelpRoom

Safe Helpline App

Responder Database (via text, website, app)

Building Hope & Resiliency: Addressing the Effects of
Sexual Assault

Secure Web Form

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Since 2011, we've created a comprehensive suite of services to connect with survivors where they are at that moment. We've looked at advances in technology as well as shifts in how we as a society interact, communicate and educate ourselves to make sure that our services are in line with what people need.

These services include:

Online Helpline and Telephone Helpline

Safe HelpRoom – our group chat option

Safe Helpline App

Responder Database – that I mentioned earlier that is available via text, website, and on the app

Building Hope & Resiliency: Addressing the effects of sexual assault – a self paced educational tool

Secure web form that can link survivors directly to DoD SAPRO

We have developed these services with an eye towards meeting the needs of victims while understanding the limitations that often accompany serving in a military environment.

Online Helpline and Telephone Helpline



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW5FgSt5dpE&feature=youtu.be>

Both the Online Helpline and Telephone Helpline provide one-on-one, 24/7 tailored crisis intervention support and information. Staff can provide all of the support we described earlier including validation, information, brainstorming and local resources via both platforms.

These services can be used by anyone but may be especially helpful for a survivor that needs that one-on-one interaction or has specific questions or issues they need to discuss.

The Telephone Helpline is a traditional telephone hotline setup. A user can pick up the phone, dial 877-995-5247 and be connected directly to one of our trained staff. With the telephone helpline we can also do a “warm hand-off” directly to a SARC or civilian SASP. Making it that much easier for these individuals to connect to you all and access long-term resources.

The Online helpline provides the same type of one-on-one support but through an online chat platform. This platform may be suited to those that are more comfortable chatting online than they are speaking on the phone. The online helpline also provides one additional level of anonymity and therefore may feel safer for a user.

You'll remember in the earlier scenario the Service member felt more comfortable online because he didn't want to be overheard.

With both platforms, we also offer our Follow-up support services. This is an optional service in which a survivor that has not yet reported their assault can elect to have Safe Helpline call them back. Our goal is to check in with users and make sure they have the necessary resources and support they need.

We have a short demo video so you all can see how the online helpline works. You'll see everything from the terms of service that a user must agree to before entering a chat to what the platform looks like for the staff.



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tscVaMoSkMs&feature=youtu.be>

Safe HelpRoom is a **group chat service** that allows survivors in the military to support one another in a safe online environment. The goal of Safe HelpRoom is to **create a secure community of survivors** that meet to help each other — regardless of time zone or distance. Safe HelpRoom moves **beyond crisis intervention** and helps survivors ready to take the next step.

The Safe HelpRoom may be a great tool for those survivors that are ready to connect with others that may have been through similar experiences or start reaching out to support others. Here survivors can share their stories, provide support, engage while removing barriers to time, cost, distance, scheduling, and/or caregiving responsibilities that may impact their ability to access in-person services. The service is also carefully moderated to protect all of the users.

We have created another short demo video so you can see how the Safe HelpRoom works. You'll see some similarities with the online hotline platform in that there is also a terms of service, but for Safe HelpRoom you'll also notice that we ask the survivor to select a username as well. You'll also see how the moderating and reviewing functions work for our staff.



Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LM_lvx_Z0vY&feature=youtu.be

The Safe Helpline app provides easy access to all of the Safe Helpline services as well as a self-care plan and self-care exercises.

We've created a short demo video that highlights all of the major functions of the app and walks you through the self-care plan.

Responder and Transitioning Service Member Database

Texting
 552-47 (inside the U.S.)
 001-202-470-5546 (outside the U.S.)

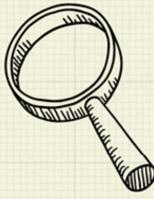
Safe Helpline Website
 Find Help Near Your Base or Installation

New Search  **Search**

Search by zip code, state, country or installation/base name.

Responder FAQs
 Military Reporting FAQs

Safe Helpline App
 Search Resources



LOCAL RESOURCES
 TRANSITIONING SERVICE RESOURCES
 TALK TO SOMEONE

Home Learn Plan Exercises Search

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The Safe Helpline Responder Database includes both military and civilian resources across the US and military resources around the world. The list includes contact information for: SARCs/VA, Medical/mental healthcare, SVC/VLC, Military police, Chaplain, 1100 RAINN affiliated SASPs. Each of the Military Services/NGB is responsible for what information is contained in the database.

The Transitioning Service member database includes a full list of DoD, VA and civilian resources that are available for survivors that are in the process of transitioning out of the military. The process and content makes it easier for users to get the information and resources that will specifically support them. These resources include employment assistance, disability assistance, housing resources, medical and mental health care

Because the Responder and transitioning service member databases are available through three different platforms (Online on the website at safehelpline.org, Through the app, and via text message in the US and internationally) it makes it incredibly easy for anyone to access a full range of local resources. A user can be anywhere in the world and still find information on who to connect with next.

Our texting services is only for the responder and transitioning service member resources. Because mobile service providers maintain transcripts of text messages,

we are not able to provide any type of crisis counseling or have any discussions over text because we can not keep it anonymous and confidential.

Building Hope & Resiliency Addressing the Effects of Sexual Assault



Building Hope & Resiliency: Addressing the Effects of Sexual Assault is a self-guided, online, educational program that seeks to help individuals begin to recover, heal, and build resiliency after a sexual assault.

This service would allow those survivors that may not be ready to even to speak to anyone yet (even in an anonymous setting) get the information and resources they need.

The program features definitions, helpful information about coping mechanisms, practical relaxation exercises, and links to resources and referrals for on-going support to enhance a survivor's ability to cope with the short and long-term effects of sexual assault. Also included is a brief, optional self-assessment for users to gauge how effective their current coping strategies are and whether they may benefit from additional support and resources.

Completion of the program has been approved for 1 hour of D-SAACP continuing education credit.

Secure Web Form

Military Feedback Form

First Name

Last Name

User *
 Please indicate which of the following applies to you

Service Affiliation *
 Please indicate which of the following applies to you

Status/Position *
 Please indicate which of the following applies to you

Installation/Base *
 Please tell us where the interaction took place

Date of Incident
 Please give the date of the negative interaction (not the assault)

Installation/Base *
 Please tell us where the interaction took place

Date of Incident
 Please give the date of the negative interaction (not the assault)

Name and/or Office of Military Personnel
 Name and/or office of the person you are writing about

What is this person's title or position?

Your Comments *
 If you have a complaint, compliment, or believe you have experienced retaliation in any form, please be as specific as possible.

Would you like SAPRO to follow up with you regarding this complaint? *

safehelpline.org 877-995-5247

This secure web form on the Safe Helpline website allows anyone who has feedback (positive or negative) to share that feedback directly with DoD SAPRO

For example, survivors who may have concerns about retaliation or how sexual assault is being handled in their command can provide that information directly to DoD SAPRO.

The form can be completed with as much or as little information as the user feels comfortable sharing, and can be submitted anonymously.

The form goes directly to DoD SAPRO.

Anonymous and Confidential Support

Platforms are built in-house to provide an anonymous confidential service.

- Do not ask for Personally Identifiable Information before or during a call or chat.
- Do not save session transcripts.
- Do not save session recordings.

DoD Safe Helpline Staff-Victim Privilege

- **Per Executive Order 13696**, communications between a victim and Safe Helpline staff for the purpose of receiving advice or support assistance is privileged information in cases arising under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

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All of the Safe Helpline services are completely anonymous and confidential. We have taken a number of steps in the building of our technology platforms to the policies we follow to remain a completely anonymous service for our users.

In addition to the technological protections Safe Helpline has built in, Safe Helpline staff also have privileged communications with victims from Executive order 13696. This means that a victim may refuse to disclose information shared between the victim and Safe Helpline staff, and may prevent staff from sharing the information without the victim's consent.

Support for Stakeholders

- Staff Training
 - Training covers: Empathy, How to talk to survivors, Neurobiology of trauma, Military culture and traditions, Military resources and policies (Restricted and Unrestricted reporting).
- Responder Database helps you always know who to contact regardless of if they are on your base.
- The App can be used as a self-care tool for you and your staff or as an easy reference when you're in the field.
- Order free print materials, download info-papers, and social media text at www.shop.safehelpline.org.

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The services we provide directly compliment and support the work you are doing in the field.

Questions for the audience:

How many of you have used the online search tool?

How many have called the SHL?

How many people already have the app downloaded on your phone?

What's Next?

- Updates to existing systems
- Expanding use of existing systems
- Expanding the online training that we make available to the public
 - Building Hope
 - Safe Helpline 101
 - How to Support a Survivor

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- Updates to existing systems – Website and App
- Expanding use of existing systems – making Safe HelpRoom available for SARCs/VAs to host their own sessions for their local communities, with time, topic and audience to be determined by the SARC/VA.
- Expanding the online training that we make available to the public – Series of self-guided educational programs to connect with different audiences.
 - Building Hope – for survivors (launched)
 - Safe Helpline 101 – primarily for stakeholders to learn more about our services but also for anyone (pending launch).
 - How to Support a Survivor – Friends and Family looking to learn more about what someone might be going through, what they can do, and what resources are available to them (pending launch).
- If anyone has any additional ideas or suggestions for how we can improve or develop new Safe Helpline services, please reach out to us directly or use the Military Feedback form available on Safe Helpline.org

Questions?

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Thank you!

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