Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP) –

Professionalizing Victim Advocacy in the Military

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

- Understand why the DoD has a certification program
- Be familiar with the credentialing renewal process
- Recognize acceptable credentialing renewal practices and procedures

SAPRO briefs: “SAPRO standardized sexual response to victims and professionalized military victim advocacy by recognizing SARC’s and SAPR VA’s specialized training, dedicated service, and commitment to upholding the highest standards for victims. SAPRO partnered with NOVA, the largest national network of its kind in the worldwide organization of victim assistance, to administer the D-SAACP program which was modeled after the NACP (National Advocate Credentialing Program).

To meet this requirement, and to standardize sexual assault response to victims and professionalize victim advocacy roles, the Department established the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP). This program consists of three prongs: (1) a national credential, (2) a competency framework, and (3) a plan for the evaluation and oversight of training of DoD personnel who provide advocacy services to sexual assault victims in the military.

NOVA is the largest national network of its kind in the worldwide organization of victim assistance personnel and programs. NOVA consists of victim assistance practitioners and programs, criminal justice agencies and professionals, mental health professionals, researchers, survivors, and others committed to the recognition and implementation of victims’ rights and services. NOVA’s mission is to promote rights and services for victims of crime and crises everywhere. NOVA was central and catalytic to the launch of the NACP in 2003 and remains as the secretariat for this allied professional credential today. NOVA facilitates the processing and approval of national advocate credentialing applications for NACP.

NACP, is a voluntary, national credentialing body for advocates and providers of crime victim services. Representatives from national and state victim assistance organizations participate in the National Advocate Credentialing Review Committee. This committee reviews and approves applications and identifies any revisions necessary to the credentialing program to best meet the needs of the field.
Agenda

• Program History
• Program Goals
• Reasons to Professionalize
• Key Policy Provisions
• How to Obtain Initial Credentials
• How to Renew Credentials
• Expiration Standards
• Discussion Questions
Poll Title: What one word would you use to describe yourself as a Victim Advocate?
https://www.polleverywhere.com/free_text_polls/B4W8kCdeqrJ7rGN
Program History
SAPRO briefs: “in 2012 the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 required DoD to establish a training and certification program for SARC’s and SAPR VA’s. To meet this requirement, and to standardize sexual assault response to victims and professionalize victim advocacy roles, the Department established the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP).”

- FY12: The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 required the Department of Defense (DoD) to establish a training and certification program for Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC) and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Victim Advocates (VA). Additionally,
- December of 2009, the Under Secretary of Defense (USD) for Personnel and Readiness (P&R) directed the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) to proceed with implementing oversight recommendations, to include Recommendation 6a from the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services (DTF-SAMS) Report, which calls on the Department to establish VAs certified by the National Victim Assistance Academy. Individuals who complete the National Victim Assistance Academy program receive a credential from the National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP), the only national credentialing body in the country for victim service providers.
- To meet this requirement, and to standardize sexual assault response to victims and professionalize victim advocacy roles, the Department established the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP). This program consists of three prongs: (1) a national credential, (2) a competency framework, and (3) a plan for the evaluation and oversight of training of DoD personnel who provide advocacy services to sexual assault victims in the military.
Program Goals
SAPRO Briefs:
The goals of the program include:

**Improving the quality of response to sexual assault victims.** This certification program communicates to Service members and external stakeholders that the Department has a victim response approach consistent with national victim advocacy standards.

**Recognizing how SARC and SAPR VAs contribute to unit readiness by creating a climate of trust and mutual respect.** Certified SARC and SAPR VAs address victim needs and may also mitigate sexual assaults negative effects on a unit.

**Communicating to military leadership that victim advocacy is a specialized skill set.** By involving commanders in the selection of SARC and SAPR VAs, commanders better understand the role and importance of the sexual assault advocacy function, and they gain confidence in the capabilities of their SARC and SAPR VAs.

**Demonstrating to Service members that victim advocacy leads to professional development.** Maintaining a certification requires SARC and SAPR VAs to engage in continuing education and development that enhances teamwork and interpersonal skills, which in turn can increase their readiness to participate in a broader range of missions.
Reasons to Professionalize

As a professional, you possess:

- A specialized skill-set
- Inherent credibility

Professionals are accountable for their behavior and performance

Professionals pursue learning

- Specialized skillset through national standards
- Improves credibility through national recognition
- Professionals pursue on-going learning through Continuing education
- Validation through outside credentialing body – ethical requirements and performance requirements and oversight, leveling UP
Reasons to Professionalize

Certification has national reach:
- Supports continued work beyond military career
- Contributes to the national forward momentum to respect and empower victims of crime

Allows military advocates to transfer skills to civilian victim service organizations through the bridge application.
Recognize the interests of the victim as a primary responsibility.
2. Respect the victim's civil and legal rights, subject only to laws requiring disclosure of information to appropriate other sources.
3. Respect the victim's rights to privacy and confidentiality, subject only to laws requiring disclosure.
4. Respond compassionately to each victim with personalized services.
5. Accept the victim's statement of events as it is told, withholding opinion or judgment, whether or not a suspected offender has been identified, arrested, convicted, or acquitted.
6. Provide services to every victim, within policy guidelines set by the DoD and the Services, without attributing blame, no matter what the victim's conduct was at the time of the victimization or at another stage of the victim's life.
7. Foster maximum self-determination on the part of the victim.
8. Serve as a victim advocate when assigned, and in that capacity, act on behalf of the victim's stated needs and within policy guidelines set by DoD and the Services.
9. Should one victim's needs conflict with another's, act with regard to one victim only after promptly referring the other to another qualified SARC/SAPR VA.
10. Have no personal or sexual relations with victims currently supported by SARCs or SAPR VAs or with alleged offenders, in recognition that to do so risks exploitation of the knowledge and trust derived from the professional relationship.

11. Make victim referrals to other resources or services only in the victim's best interest, avoiding any conflict of interest in the process, and do so in accordance with DoD regulations.

II. In relationships with colleagues, other professionals, and the public, the SARC/SAPR VA shall:

1. Conduct relationships with colleagues in such a way as to promote mutual respect and improvement of service.
2. Conduct relationships with allied professionals such that they are given equal respect and dignity as professionals in the victim assistance field.
3. Take steps to quell negative, insubstantial rumors about colleagues and allied professionals.

II. (Continued)

4. Share knowledge and encourage proficiency and excellence in victim assistance among colleagues and allied professionals, paid and volunteer.
5. Provide professional support, guidance, and assistance to new SARC/SAPR VAs to the field in order to promote consistent quality and professionalism in victim assistance.
6. Obey all applicable Federal, DoD, and Service laws and regulations.

III. In her or his professional conduct, the SARC/SAPR VA shall:

1. Maintain high personal and professional standards in the capacity of a service provider and advocate for victims.
2. Seek and maintain a proficiency in the delivery of services to victims.
3. Not discriminate against any victim, employee, colleague, allied professional, or member of the public on the basis of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, race, national origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation.
4. In accordance with restricted reporting, applicable privileged communications, and all applicable Federal, DoD, and Service privacy laws and regulations, respect the privacy of information provided by the victims served before, during, and after the course of the professional relationship.
5. Clearly distinguish in public statements representing one's personal views from positions adopted by organizations for which she or he works or is a member, in accordance with Service policy.
6. Not use her or his official position to secure gifts, monetary rewards, or special
privileges or advantages.
7. Notify competent authorities of the conduct of any colleague or allied professional that constitutes mistreatment of a victim or that brings the profession into disrepute.
8. Notify competent authorities of any conflict of interest that prevents oneself or a colleague from being able to provide competent services to a victim, or from working cooperatively with colleagues or allied professionals, or from being impartial in the assistance of any victim.
9. Notify competent authorities immediately if charged, arrested, and/or convicted of any criminal activity.
IV. In her or his responsibility to any other profession, the SARC/SAPR VA will be bound by the ethical standards of the allied profession of which she or he is a member.
Key Policy Provisions
The policy has key provisions built in that establish standards of character, competency and commitment expected of our victim advocates. These values are built into the Professional Code of Ethics.

Advocates embody (exemplify) the following values:
Character: Defined by the values of our professional code of ethics
Competency: External evaluation by those of the profession
Commitment: Internal policing to ensure standards are followed and peer correction take place

Must abide by Professional Code of Ethics
Poll Title: As you review the Professional Code of Ethics, is there is anything you disagree with?
https://www.polleverywhere.com/free_text_polls/N0BbRpOHRtuA7zu
How to Obtain Initial Credentials
NOVA manages the process from application receipt through certificate mailing in 120 days or less

Application process and vetting mirrors process for new applications

NOVA administers the D-SAACP for the Department through a contract. Our contract has specific requirements, one of which includes timelines for processing application packets.

- Applicant submits application package to NOVA
- NOVA confirms receipt and processes application. Applicant receives email confirming receipt of application within five business days
- NOVA reviews application for completeness and accuracy. As SMEs’ NOVA staff looks closely at the content of information provided in each and every packet and assesses it against requirements and standards. They perform detailed analysis in order to ensure each and every packet going before the Committee has all the information needed and that the information adequately fulfills the requirement. This level of scrutiny prior to the Committee meetings ensure less packets are denied or sent back for clarification.

Application process and vetting mirrors process for new applications
• The Applicant is informed of application status within ten business days. The packet will be either pending SME review or will be Incomplete (gives an applicant time to fix what is wrong)

• D-SAACP Committee reviews application materials.

• Applicant notified certification results via official email notification of certification within five business days after last day of D-SAAP Committee Meeting. Applicant can start providing advocacy services with receipt of email

• NOVA mails certificate packets to credentialed SAPR professional (Packets are mailed four to six weeks after the D-SAACP Committee Meeting)
How to Renew Credentials
We ask that you be credentialed because we believe the specialized skills that are required to do your job require rigorous and effective training. D-SAACP is one way that we can ensure that our SARCs and VAs have the best possible training and preparation.

Every year applicants don't meet CEU requirements. We create this checklist for you to ensure that planning for your CEUs will contribute to your recertification.

Include these guidelines on FAQ handout
Examples of training that NACP has counted towards CE:
FAQs:
- how many hours can be online training?
- can I use my book club as CE?
- Does DSAID track my training?
Renewal Requirements

Renewal applications must be submitted for review in the expiration quarter.
Expiration Standards
SAPRO, NOVA staff, and the Services sat down and discussed “What if I missed my renewal deadline and my certification has expired” and came up with the following for expired applicants. This is a new process and was updated on 14 September 2017 to streamline the process and make renewing expired credentials easier.

- If you have missed 1-3 deadlines:
  - You may re-certify with just CEUs up to eight years from your last certification. Submit DD FM 2950-1, Renewal Application, along with documentation of 32 CEUs

- If you have missed 4 or more deadlines:
  - You must re-certify with your Service’s initial SAPR training if it’s been longer than 8 years since your last certification. Submit DD FM 2950-1, Renewal Application, along with documentation of initial SAPR training taken within the last year

https://www.trynova.org/credentialing/d-saaccp-dod/
Discussion Questions
Poll Title: A SARC can sign both letters of recommendation (page 11 from SARC and page 12 from Supervisor) for a SAPR VA.
https://www.polleverywhere.com/multiple_choice_polls/yjj4u3Z2P57Vs2I
Poll Title: Letters of Recommendation should be dated after an applicant has completed their initial training/continuing education units.
https://www.polleverywhere.com/multiple_choice_polls/jSCdLtaAlggwXOX
Poll Title: A SAPR VA needs page 11 and 12 letters of recommendation, but a SARC needs page 12 and 13 (or page 13 if the exception is applied for) letters of recommendation.

https://www.polleverywhere.com/multiple_choice_polls/1WRDQOdxtZL6WfY
Poll Title: Are you interested in being a Victim Advocate after leaving the military?  
https://www.polleverywhere.com/multiple_choice_polls/Nn7ZN84voZ06FOe
Poll Title: What have you learned from this workshop?
https://www.polleverywhere.com/free_text_polls/CuthyfTIR2cIVag
Inform the process

Questions?
Contact Information

Contact SAPRO:
whs.mc-alex.wso.mbx.SAPRO@mail.mil

Contact D-SAACP:
DSAACP@trynova.org

Learn More:
www.sapr.mil

Get Help:
877-995-5247
www.safehelpline.org