



## Appendix E: Safe Helpline Data



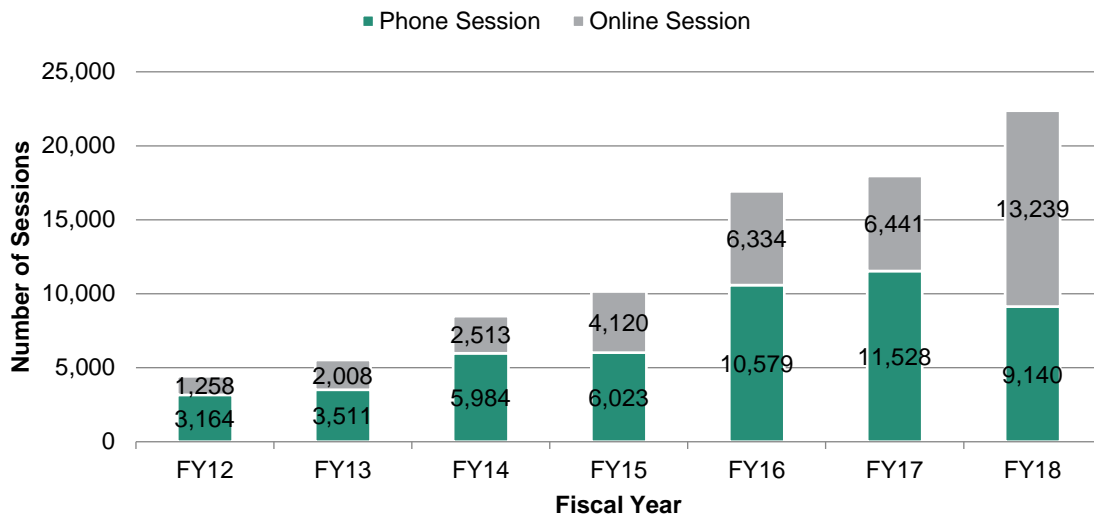
# Appendix E: Safe Helpline Data

The Department of Defense (DoD) Safe Helpline (SHL) provides crisis intervention, support, information, and referrals to resources for members of the DoD community who experience sexual assault. The service is confidential, anonymous, secure, and available at all hours of the day. SHL staff support victims in their recovery process by providing personalized assistance, safety planning, and referrals tailored to their individual needs. The resource is often the first place victims disclose a sexual assault incident. As such, SHL can be a first step in the reporting process, and a key source of support for Service members who might not otherwise reach out for help through military channels. This summary provides an overview of users served and services provided by SHL in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018.

## Usage and Outreach

SHL was utilized by a growing number of members in the DoD community in FY18 (See Figure 1). In the past year, 22,379 users (9,140 phone users and 13,239 online users) contacted SHL, a 25 percent increase from FY17. The SHL team continued to support individual bases and installations with 51 events and increased online advertising. The increased outreach promoted awareness of SHL as a resource for victims and their supporters.

**Figure 1. Safe Helpline Online and Telephone User Sessions**



## Phone and Online Sessions

The analysis of users and services provided is based on anonymous data obtained through calls and on-line chats, and information is never solicited. As a result, SHL staff do not always know if callers are currently a Service member, a retired or separated member, or another status. FY18 findings are outlined below.

## User Characteristics

While 22,379 users made contact with SHL in FY18, relatively few disclose information about a sexual assault experience. An event was discussed and a user-victim relationship was

disclosed in about 10 percent of sessions. In these sessions, 84 percent of users identified as a victim and 16 percent identified as a friend, family member, intimate partner, or acquaintance.

## Reporting Concerns

Users frequently contacted SHL to discuss reporting concerns. To better understand these concerns, SAPRO analyzed data from a sample of 1,301 users who identified as adult victims of sexual assault in FY18. Most incidents involved both a military-affiliated victim and alleged perpetrator. Key findings pertaining to reporting concerns are as follows:

- More than half (56 percent) of the 1,301 users stated they had not made a sexual assault report. Only 10 percent of users had previously reported their incident to a military authority, while 34 percent did not disclose whether they had reported.
- Of the 124 victims who discussed reporting motivations, the most frequent reasons were to stop the alleged offender from hurting others (37 percent), to punish the alleged offender (32 percent), to seek mental health assistance (26 percent), and to stop the alleged offender from hurting the victim again (23 percent).<sup>1</sup>

## Concerns of Men Who Disclose Victimization

SHL plays a key role in the Department's efforts to enhance support and resources for male Service members impacted by sexual assault. Staff receive specialized training on male concerns and sexual assault stigma. FY18 data provides insight into concerns unique to male victims, as one-third of phone users were men. These findings have important implications for SHL and the *Men's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Plan* described in the main body of this report. Based on the sample of 1,301 adult victims:

- Men were more likely than women to disclose their assault for the first time on SHL. Specifically, 23 percent of men who are victims of adult sexual assault (versus 16 percent of women) had not disclosed prior to contacting SHL.
- Men were more likely than women to discuss "not wanting others to know" as a barrier to reporting (10 percent versus 5 percent, respectively), suggesting that within the SHL user sample, men may have elevated privacy concerns compared to women.
- Men were more likely to discuss self-conscious emotions such as shame or embarrassment relative to women (44 percent versus 35 percent, respectively).

## Referrals to Military Resources

Of the 2,766 users included in the FY18 Annual Report sample, individuals accepted referrals to military resources in one-fifth (21 percent) of sessions. One in seven users (14 percent) accepted a referral to a SARC. At the user's request, SHL staff connected callers to on-base resources in three percent of phone sessions. Most calls were transferred to SARCs.

Military resource referrals were accepted in 17 percent of sessions. One in seven victims (14 percent) stated that they had already accessed or attempted to access military services prior to contacting SHL. Civilian referrals were provided as an alternative in more than one-third of sessions (36 percent).

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<sup>1</sup> Percentages do not total to 100 percent because SHL staff were able to select more than one reason for reporting as disclosed by the user.

## User Feedback

Users provided satisfaction ratings for 233 phone and 669 online sessions. Ratings remained high throughout the year despite the increase in user volume. Average ratings were above a 4.0 on a scale of 1-5 on all domains, including ease of use, satisfaction with staffer knowledge and service, likelihood to recommend SHL, and intent to use resources provided.

## Additional Resources

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### Safe Helpline Educational Tool

*Building Hope and Resiliency: Addressing the Effects of Sexual Assault* is a self-guided, online, educational program for the DoD community. The program features information about coping mechanisms, practical relaxation exercises, and links to resources and referrals for on-going support. In FY18, 292 registered users completed the *Building Hope and Resiliency* module. Of the 78 module users that provided feedback in FY18, the majority expressed satisfaction with the course, indicating that it provided strategies to cope with feelings and increased their knowledge of mental health resources. In addition, 94 percent found the course easy to understand, and 89 percent would recommend it to others.

### Safe HelpRoom

Safe HelpRoom is an anonymous, moderated online group chat service available all hours of the day. The Safe HelpRoom allows individuals who have experienced sexual assault in the military to connect and support each other. Special sessions for men are available every Sunday. In FY18, the Safe HelpRoom hosted 2,510 visitors.

In FY18, the Local Safe HelpRoom pilot project provided certified SARCs and SAPR VAs with the opportunity to leverage secure and anonymous Safe HelpRoom technology to host online moderated peer support sessions. After completing the Local Safe HelpRoom moderator training, SARCs and SAPR VAs can create sessions for their own base, installation or region with a tailored time, topic and structure that meets the needs of their local communities. The Local Safe HelpRoom allows survivors to connect and support each other in a safe and secure environment, without the barriers of time, location and stigma that may prevent survivors from accessing support services in-person.

### Prison Rape Elimination Act Hotline

SHL also serves as a hotline for individuals assaulted in military correctional facilities, playing a key role in the Department's implementation of the requirements of the Prison Rape Elimination Act. In FY18, SHL received 21 calls from users in military correctional facilities. In addition to providing crisis intervention, information, and referrals, staff assist callers with both Unrestricted and Anonymous Reports. Specifically, staff facilitate anonymous reports, complete mandated reporting as required by law, and facilitate warm handoffs to SARCs for Unrestricted Reports.