DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE OFFICE

Sexual Assault: Know Your Rights, Know Your Options

You are not alone. As a Service member, you have many protections, services, and resources to help you recover after a sexual assault. Be sure to speak with your Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) or Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Victim Advocate (VA) about available resources and services after a sexual assault. *Not sure where to start? Call or visit the DoD Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247 or SafeHelpline.org for confidential help.*

What are my rights?

Safety.

As a crime victim, you have the right to be treated with fairness and respect for your dignity and privacy. You also have the right to be reasonably protected from the suspect. A SARC or SAPR VA can advise you on your options to obtain a military protective order, civilian protective order (also known as a restraining order), or find temporary shelter.

Free Forensic Exam and Medical Care.

All Service members and their adult dependents making a report are eligible for a free forensic examination to collect evidence from their assault as well as immediate and follow-up medical care, including treatment for injury, prevention medication for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and trauma. Convalescent leave is also available. A SARC or SAPR VA can assist with these requests. Leave is not needed to attend most appointments during duty hours.

Protection from Retaliation.

If you made an official sexual assault report and believe your career has been negatively impacted; find you are being socially excluded in your unit; or are experiencing mistreatment by the chain of command, tell your SARC or SAPR VA. They can help you find the reporting channel and resources to address your situation. As a sexual assault victim, you also have the right to have a General or Flag Officer review a discharge action being taken against you associated with reporting.

What are my options?

Make a report.

Make an Unrestricted Report to receive available services and participate in an investigation. Make a Restricted Report to receive health care, advocacy, and legal services without notifying command or law enforcement. You can also report an incident that occurred prior to entering the military as well as receive help with retaliation you believe to be associated with a report.

Participate in the CATCH Program.

Serial offenders often count on victims to not report the crime. With the Catch a Serial Offender (CATCH) program, you can anonymously submit information about the suspect to DoD criminal investigators. If the suspect information you provide matches another submission, the SARC will notify you and check if you want to further participate in an investigation.

Receive emergency care, medical treatment, and counseling.

Regardless of when your incident occurred, a variety of services are available to assist in your recovery. These include mental health counseling, medical care, and spiritual assistance from a chaplain. Department of Veterans Affairs centers can also provide counseling services that are confidential and do not report back to the chain of command.

Get legal representation.

DoD provides sexual assault victims with confidential legal advice and representation throughout the military justice process. These attorneys are called Special Victims' Counsel (SVC), Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC), or Victims' Counsel (VC). Talk to them about your legal rights and protections. Your communications with these attorneys are confidential and protected by military law.

Request an expedited transfer.

If you made an Unrestricted Report, you can request a change in your duty location from your leadership if you feel uncomfortable or at risk of retaliation. Options include relocating within your unit, elsewhere on base, or to a different installation to help your recovery and return to health. Command owes a response to the request within five days and many PCS moves occur within 30 days of approval. If you do not feel safe, contact your SARC immediately and request a Safety move.

For more information on who can help you, please visit www.sapr.mil/dedicated-response-personnel.