

Sexual Assault Program Content Guide

The following established style guidelines reflect the longstanding practices of developers and editors of content for the sexual assault program area. They are consistent with the rules and guidance outlined in the Associated Press Stylebook and reflective of Office of Military Community and Family Policy style and usage preferences.

Do

- Write in gender-neutral terms.
- Write in relationship-neutral terms, such as “partner” or “couple.”

Do Not

- Make assumptions
- Tell people how they feel
- Tell people what they should, need to, must, ought to, can’t or won’t do
- Tell people what they should always or never do

Preferred Terms

Preferred	As opposed to
Service members do not like to be labeled as “victims.” As a result, we try to refrain from using the term whenever possible, and instead talk about “service members who report a sexual assault.” For example: <i>“Service members wanting to report a sexual assault should contact the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program.”</i>	victim, survivor
SAPR victim advocate or advocacy	victim advocate program
alleged offender; in a legal proceeding, use “the accused”	offender, perpetrator, etc.
sexual assault	rape, forced sex, forced intercourse, forced sexual touching, etc.
men, women, man, woman (use only as nouns)	male, female (use primarily as adjectives)

Definitions

(These are general definitions. Readers should refer to the Uniform Code of Military Justice for the actual criminal definitions.)

- **CATCH a serial offender** – This program, in an effort to identify repeat offenders, provides service members and their adult dependents who have filed a restricted report of sexual assault a confidential way to provide information about the incident and the accused to Department of Defense criminal investigators without initiating an investigation.
- **DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office** – This office represents the secretary of defense as the single point of authority, accountability and oversight for the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program, except for legal processes and criminal investigative matters that are the responsibility of the judge advocates general of the military departments and the inspector general, respectively.
- **Restricted, unrestricted reporting options** – Under the DOD’s confidentiality policy, service members who are victims of sexual assault have two reporting options – restricted reporting and unrestricted reporting. Service members and their adult dependents are eligible to make both restricted and unrestricted reports. Military retirees and other civilian victims may use only unrestricted reporting.
 - **Unrestricted reporting** allows an eligible person who is sexually assaulted to access health care and counseling and to request an official investigation of the allegation using existing reporting channels (e.g., chain of command, law enforcement, health care personnel, the SARC).
 - **Restricted reporting** allows service members wanting to report a sexual assault to confidentially disclose the assault to specified individuals (i.e., a SARC, a SAPR victim advocate or health care personnel) and receive health care treatment, including emergency care, counseling and assignment of a SARC or SAPR VA, without triggering an official investigation.
- **SAPR victim advocate** – A SAPR VA is a person who provides nonclinical crisis intervention, referral and ongoing nonclinical support to adult sexual assault victims. This support includes providing information to victims regarding available options and resources. The VA, on behalf of the sexual assault victim, provides liaison assistance with other organizations and agencies on victim care matters and reports directly to the sexual assault response coordinator when performing victim advocacy duties.
- **Sexual assault** – Sexual assault is intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation or abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent. The term includes a broad category of penetrative and contact sexual offenses consisting of the following UCMJ offenses: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy (forced oral or anal sex) or attempts to commit these acts.

- **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program** – This program establishes DOD policies for military departments and DOD components to implement worldwide. The program’s objective is to create an environment and military community free from sexual assault.
- **Sexual assault response coordinator** – This person is the single point of contact at an installation, large military unit or for a geographic area overseeing sexual assault response services to service members and their adult dependents who may have experienced a sexual assault. The SARC coordinates medical treatment, including emergency care, for victims of sexual assault; tracks the services provided to victims from the initial report through final disposition and resolution of the case, and conducts outreach and training for the military community. The SARC also trains and organizes SAPR victim advocates who provide direct support to victims.