



The following established style guidelines reflect the long-standing practices of developers and editors of content for sexual assault. 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.

Content Tips

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

Things to Avoid

- Don’t make assumptions.
- Don’t tell people how they feel.
- Don’t tell people what they should, need to, must, ought to or can’t do.
- Don’t tell people what they should always or never do.
- Try to refrain from using the term “victim” whenever possible, and instead talk about “service members who report a sexual assault.” Service members do not like to be labeled as victims.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
SAPR	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response
SAPRO	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office
SAPR VA	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response victim advocate
SARC	Sexual Assault Response Coordinator



Preferred Terms

Acceptable

alleged offender (as opposed to offender, perpetrator, etc.) **Note:** In a legal proceeding, use “the accused” (as opposed to offender, perpetrator, etc.)

Men, women, man, woman (use only as nouns); male, female (use primarily as adjectives)

SAPR victim advocate or advocacy (as opposed to victim advocate program)

Sexual assault (as opposed to rape, forced sex, forced intercourse, forced sexual touching, etc.)

Definitions

Term	Definition
CATCH a serial offender	The CATCH Program offers victims of sexual abuse the chance to anonymously submit information about alleged abusers unknown to law enforcement as a way of helping the Defense Department identify serial offenders.
DOD Safe Helpline	The Defense Department’s Safe Helpline is a secure, confidential and anonymous crisis support service specially designed for members of the DOD community affected by sexual assault. The Safe Helpline can provide an anonymous and confidential space where survivors can connect to get answers to their questions about the process and help to ensure they can make an informed decision about next steps. The Safe Helpline provides live, confidential help over the phone — just call 877-995-5247. The phone number is the same in the U.S. and worldwide via DSN.



Term	Definition
DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office	<p>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 inspectors general, respectively.</p>
Restricted, unrestricted reporting options	<p>Under the DOD’s confidentiality policy, service members who are victims of sexual assault have two reporting options — restricted and unrestricted. Service members and their adult dependents are eligible to make both restricted and unrestricted reports. Civilian victims may only use unrestricted reporting, unless an exception applies. Reporting options and SAPR program services are not applicable to military retirees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 sexual assault response coordinator). • Restricted reporting allows service members wanting to report a sexual assault to confidentially disclose the assault to specified individuals (i.e., a sexual assault response coordinator, SAPR victim advocate or health care personnel) and receive health care treatment, including emergency care, counseling and assignment of a SARC or SAPR victim advocate, without triggering an official investigation.
SAPR victim advocate	<p>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 SAPR VA, on behalf of the sexual assault victim, provides liaison assistance with other organizations and</p>



Term	Definition
	agencies on victim care matters, and reports directly to the SARC when performing victim advocacy duties.
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office	SAPRO is responsible for oversight of the Defense Department’s sexual assault policy. SAPRO works hand-in-hand with the services and the civilian community to develop and implement innovative prevention and response programs.

Official Resources

Defense Department policy

- [DOD Directive 6495.01, “Sexual Assault Prevention and Response \(SAPR\) Program,” Jan. 23, 2012, Incorporating Change 5, Nov. 10, 2021](#)
- [DOD Instruction 6495.02, “Sexual Assault Prevention and Response \(SAPR\) Program Procedures,” March 28, 2013, as amended](#)

Defense Department resources

- [Defense Department Sexual Assault Prevention and Response](#)

Military OneSource websites

- [DOD Safe Helpline resource page](#)
- [DOD Safe Helpline mobile app resource page](#)
- [Military Sexual Trauma resource page](#)