



Key Message

While the Defense Department has led the implementation of enterprise-wide guidance on prevention, states can address harmful behaviors such as sexual assault and domestic violence by expanding protections for victims. Enacting state policy best practices can supplement federal program efforts and changes.

Discussion Points

1. Interpersonal violence is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person. It can take several forms – including physical, emotional, sexual, economic, verbal and psychological abuse.
2. The military takes incidents of violence, abuse, sexual assault and harassment seriously and is committed to a timely response regarding reports of violence. Often, both civilian and military authorities are involved in addressing domestic violence cases.
3. The impact of interpersonal violence extends beyond the individual victim, as it can also undermine the mission readiness of military units and compromise national security. A military family's personal well-being is a critical factor when it comes to their ability to effectively serve the country.
4. By advocating for the expansion of protections for victims of interpersonal violence, we are taking care of our people by ensuring that service members and their families have the support they need to overcome challenges.
5. States have implemented the following policies that specifically address the issue of interpersonal violence:
 - Extend the legal authority of military commanders and military protective orders beyond military locations and duty times.
 - Allow state courts to recognize a special victims' counsel to assist victims of abuse and harassment.
 - Mandate that states allow victims access to post-discharge travel funds to fully cover the expense of traveling to and from and participating in court proceedings.
 - Amend domestic violence definitions to include coercive control, emotional distress and psychological abuse.
 - Allow victims of military sexual trauma or interpersonal violence to appear virtually in court proceedings.



The military's service branches have an obligation to know what is happening with their service members both while they are on and off duty. Through the implementation of interpersonal violence policies at the state level, we empower victims, deter offenders and create an environment for military families that is conducive to resilience and readiness.