

July 22, 2013

## TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCATES: SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE MILITARY

# Understanding the problem and its prevention

### 1. WHAT IS HAPPENING

- Out of 22,792 U.S. soldiers, 6.1% of women and 1.2% of men said that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact in 2012. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel described this as nearly 12,000 women and 14,000 men serving in the entire military population.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2013). *2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members* (Survey Note No. 2013-007). Retrieved from [http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/research/2012\\_Workplace\\_and\\_Gender\\_Relations\\_Survey\\_of\\_Active\\_Duty\\_Members-Survey\\_Note\\_and\\_Briefing.pdf](http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/research/2012_Workplace_and_Gender_Relations_Survey_of_Active_Duty_Members-Survey_Note_and_Briefing.pdf)  
U.S. Department of Defense. (2013). *Department of Defense press briefing with Secretary Hagel and Maj. Gen. Patton on the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategy from the Pentagon* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5233>

- Most assaults occurred at a military installation during work or duty hours. Most assaults were committed by military coworkers, another military person or by a military person of higher rank (for women) or a military person within the same chain of command (for men). Offenders often used physical force or threats to ruin victims' reputations/threats of further physical harm. Victims were usually sexually harassed and stalked before the unwanted sexual contact.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2013). *2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members* (Survey Note No. 2013-007). Retrieved from [http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/research/2012\\_Workplace\\_and\\_Gender\\_Relations\\_Survey\\_of\\_Active\\_Duty\\_Members-Survey\\_Note\\_and\\_Briefing.pdf](http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/research/2012_Workplace_and_Gender_Relations_Survey_of_Active_Duty_Members-Survey_Note_and_Briefing.pdf)

- Deployment was found to be linked to increased violence against active-duty women.

Black, M. C., & Merrick, M. T. (2013). *Prevalence of intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual violence among active duty women and wives of active duty men — Comparisons with women in the U.S. general population, 2010*. Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Defense, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: [http://sapr.mil/media/pdf/research/2010\\_National\\_Intimate\\_Partner\\_and\\_Sexual\\_Violence\\_Survey-Technical\\_Report.pdf](http://sapr.mil/media/pdf/research/2010_National_Intimate_Partner_and_Sexual_Violence_Survey-Technical_Report.pdf)

### 2. THE AFTERMATH OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Similar to the larger U.S. society, sexual violence is highly underreported in the military. In the armed forces, victims who reported abuse describe being ostracized and blamed by fellow service members. Rumors and stories about the negative experiences of other survivors influence victims' decisions about whether or not to report what happened to them.

Rock, L. M., Limpari, R. N., Cook, P. J., & Hale, A. D. (2011). *2010 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members* (DMDC Report No. 2010-025). Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Defense, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office: [http://www.sapr.mil/media/pdf/research/DMDC\\_2010\\_WGRA\\_Overview\\_Report\\_of\\_Sexual\\_Assault.pdf](http://www.sapr.mil/media/pdf/research/DMDC_2010_WGRA_Overview_Report_of_Sexual_Assault.pdf)

- An emphasis on unit cohesion and the hierarchical structure of the military could deter victims from coming forward and getting help.

U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services. (2009). *Report of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services*. Retrieved from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence: [http://www.ncdsv.org/images/SAPR\\_DTFsAMS\\_Report\\_Dec\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/SAPR_DTFsAMS_Report_Dec_2009.pdf)

- Sexual violence can have a negative impact on the health and well-being of soldiers, their families, and the larger military community. Research has found connections between sexual violence while serving in the military and diagnoses of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Cater, J. K., & Leach, J. (2011). Veterans, military sexual trauma and PTSD: Rehabilitation planning implications. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 42(2), 33-40.

Kimerling, R., Street, A. E., Pavao, J., Smith, M. W., Cronkite, R. C., Holmes, T. H., & Frayne, S. M. (2010). Military-related sexual trauma among Veterans Health Administration patients returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100, 1409-1412. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.171793

Suris, A., & Lind, L. (2008). Military sexual trauma: A review of prevalence and associated health consequences in veterans. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 9, 250-269. doi:10.1177/1524838008324419

### 3. PREVENTION

- The military is making strides in preventing sexual violence and creating more options for survivors to get help. According to a 2012 survey, 70% of women and 83% of men would feel free to report sexual assault without fear of reprisal, which represents an apparent increase in service members' comfort level. Nearly 100% of respondents (96% of women and 97% of men) said that they had sexual assault training in the past year. However, these trainings seem to fall within a risk-reduction framework as opposed to a primary-prevention approach. A shift to a primary prevention approach could help end sexual violence.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2013). 2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members (Survey Note No. 2013-007). Retrieved from [http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/research/2012\\_Workplace\\_and\\_Gender\\_Relations\\_Survey\\_of\\_Active\\_Duty\\_Members-Survey\\_Note\\_and\\_Briefing.pdf](http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/research/2012_Workplace_and_Gender_Relations_Survey_of_Active_Duty_Members-Survey_Note_and_Briefing.pdf)

- Advocates can encourage the Department of Defense to broaden policies' eligibility criteria to include all victims of sexual assault, no matter what type of report they decide to file. Advocates can assist the military with establishing a cohesive prevention plan to combat sexual violence that is standard across all military branches by adopting portions of Sexual Violence and The Spectrum of Prevention: Towards a Community Solution.

Davis, R., Parks, L. F., & Cohen, L. (2006). *Sexual violence and the spectrum of prevention: Towards a community solution*. Retrieved from the National Sexual Violence resource Center: [http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications\\_NSVRC\\_Booklets\\_Sexual-Violence-and-the-Spectrum-of-Prevention\\_Towards-a-Community-Solution\\_0.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Booklets_Sexual-Violence-and-the-Spectrum-of-Prevention_Towards-a-Community-Solution_0.pdf)

Founded by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape in 2000, NSVRC identifies, develops and disseminates resources regarding all aspects of sexual violence prevention and intervention. For more information on this topic, download NSVRC's Sexual Violence in the Military: A Guide for Civilian Advocates <http://tinyurl.com/mfh52e5> or check out The National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women's (VAWnet) Special Collection: Sexual Violence in the Military <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/sexual-violence-military-0>.

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