



# SAPR

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE

---

**Commandant's Combined Commandership Course**

**Small Group Instructor Guide**

May 2022



# SAPR

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE

## Instructions

### How to Use This Guide

This guide outlines three, mentor-led guided discussions. Each should take approximately 20-25 minutes. Address each section: Prevention, Response, and Postvention to get participants thinking about the different components of SAPR and the potential effects on command climate. Your SAPR SME is available to help guide the conversation and remind all participants to call their SARC with any questions when they get to their command.

### Learning Objectives

- Set two or three overarching goals for each discussion.
- Provide basic context for the discussion.

### Scenario Narratives

- Set the scene and provides a frame of reference for the conversation.
- Give facilitators a paragraph to read as written.

### Discussion Questions

- *Provide notes to the facilitator in italics.*
- Offer questions that may be reordered or amended slightly to fit the needs of the group.
- Give “best fit” answers in the bullets, but the group may not cover all of them in the time allotted. Answers do not need to be read verbatim, but they are meant to help steer the conversation.

### Learning Objectives

#### Prevention

- Build skills to promote protective factors.
- Set the expectation for a healthy command climate.

#### Response

- Understand your responsibilities when a Marine files a report of sexual assault.
- Strategize how you will care for the Marine.
- Discuss how to handle challenges that may arise.

#### Postvention

- Consider the effects sexual assault can have on a command’s cohesion and strategize options to manage it.
- Discuss how you will handle any negative behaviors in your command following an Unrestricted Report of sexual assault.
- Discuss the benefits and dispel myths about Expedited Transfers.



# SAPR

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE

## Prevention

Prevention begins with building skills and promoting protective factors before a harmful behavior.

Protective factors may reduce the likelihood of a negative outcome.

Healthy Command Climate:

- Engaged leadership
- Respect and cohesion
- Responsibility and intervention
- Ethical standards
- Safe environment

## Scenario

The first discussion will focus on establishing a healthy command climate and building skills in your Marines to prevent sexual assault. Consider anything you know about the command during this conversation.

## Discussion

Building skills such as healthy relationships, respect, cohesion, and healthy boundaries can help reduce harmful behaviors such as sexual assault. Consider how you will apply Operational Risk Management for your command. Think about how you can increase responsibility, intervention, positive workplace behaviors, respect, and cohesion. These all tie to preventing sexual assault.

**Question:** How will you leverage existing resources and build skills with your Marines to prevent sexual assault?

- Marine Corps programs and activities can build cohesion: unit PT, Semper Fit programs, Single Marine Program, team building activities.
- EOA/EOR, SAPR, Family Advocacy Program, Marine Corps Family Team Building have training to build skills to improve workplace behaviors.
- The Leadership Resource Guide has information on all MF programs.
- Model Marine Corps leadership principles and skills you have relied on your whole career and expect nothing less from leaders at all levels.
- Hold Marines who engage in negative behaviors accountable.

Every leader wants to prevent sexual assault in their ranks. There are an abundance of Marine Corps programs and SMEs to help build positive skills. Taking the time to build these skills can be challenging.

**Question:** What challenges can you expect when trying to prioritize prevention? What solutions can you implement to prioritize prevention in your command?

- Challenges: Time, need to focus on the mission, prevention isn't one for one (do this and prevent that)
- Solutions: Work smarter, not harder. Many protective factors for sexual assault are also protective factors for other harmful behaviors, like suicide or domestic abuse. Engage your SMEs to create joint events to address multiple things at once.
- Set time aside for a prevention activity monthly across your command and encourage company commanders to do the same. A prevention activity doesn't have to be explicitly "sexual assault" focused. It can be a unit event to build connectedness, respect, or cohesion— those are protective factors!

As leaders, your message about sexual assault, the SAPR program, prevention, and your expectations of your Marines are crucial to set the tone in your command. You will be required to issue a policy letter and a signed SOP.

**Question:** How will you approach your Command Philosophy Development to deliver sexual assault messages to your Marines?

- Lead with personal meaning.
- Overall health, wellness, and readiness of your Marines is a priority and enhances their readiness for the Marine Corps mission.



# SAPR

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE

## Prevention

Command Climate also sets the tone for how your leadership team will respond to victims after they report. The actions you take before a report can impact who reports and how supported they feel.

DoD survey results help us see the importance of climate, as well as the importance of our next topic, response. Fewer than half of the active duty women surveyed who had reported a sexual assault indicated their leadership:

- Made them feel supported to a large extent after they reported.
- Provided them flexibility to attend a related appointment.
- Expressed concern for their well-being to a large extent.

## Discussion

- “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”
- Sexual assault detracts from our mission.
- Sexual assault is contrary to our core values.
- Normalize help seeking behaviors including SAPR.

Sometimes Marines check out of conversations about SAPR because they do not believe it will be relevant to them. They do not see themselves being sexually assaulted or being a potential offender. It is key for you and all of your leadership team, to include Company Commanders and NCOs, are on the same page about the importance of SAPR.

**Question:** As a leadership team, how will you reinforce your messages about sexual assault and prevention to all ranks and encourage them to buy into the SAPR program?

- Kick off SAPR/prevention training, speak to why this matters to you.
- Encourage Marines, including your Company Commanders and NCOs, to identify their own reasons to care about SAPR’s mission.
- Participate in prevention activities with your Marines.
- Establish leadership presence during times and locations that are known to be high-risk for sexual assault.
- Provide opportunities for feedback and act on it.
- Walk the walk. Set the tone for what behaviors are unacceptable and hold Marines and leaders who violate them accountable.
- Encourage Company Commanders to use prevention programs in addition to regimental level activities/stand-downs.



# SAPR

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE

## Response

### FY20 SAPR Annual Report Highlights:

- 1,181 total USMC reports, a continued rise since FY13.
- 23% of victims were men.
- Over 97% of reported in-Service incidents involved an enlisted victim.
- E-3 is the most common victim rank.
- Victims and subjects are usually no more than one rank higher or lower.
- More than 60% of In-Service incidents occurred aboard an installation.
- About half involved alcohol; however, it does not necessarily mean misuse or intoxication.
- Early indicators suggest FY21 totals may be slightly higher.

## Scenario

Cpl John Howard filed an Unrestricted Report of sexual assault. Last Friday, he went out with several NCOs to celebrate a promotion and ended up at someone's apartment. Cpl Howard says that night he woke up to a male Sgt performing oral sex on him. After a brief altercation, the Sgt left the apartment. Cpl Howard and the Sgt are in your command. As a leader, your first instinct may be to want to get more information or even talk to Cpl Howard about what happened. You also need to balance having the alleged offender and victim in your command.

## Discussion

**Question:** Do you have a responsibility to find out what happened?

- Your first priority should be ensuring the immediate safety of the Marine, and notifying NCIS and the SARC if you haven't already.
- **Independent and Command-directed investigations are not permitted for sexual assault.** Only law enforcement investigates sexual assault reports.
- Ensure both Marines are safe and both are connected to services.
- Stay neutral.
- Never address the sexual assault with an alleged offender without speaking with NCIS and SJA first. You may jeopardize a criminal investigation.
- Let the process work.
- Your SARC is your SME to help you through administrative processes, policy, and concerns you may have about your Marine's wellbeing.

A few weeks have passed and you notice that Cpl Howard is SIQ more frequently and his job performance and physical fitness have dropped to unacceptable levels. Sometimes it is hard to know what to say or how to support someone who is sexually assaulted. (*Review the DoD survey findings on the edge of page 4 about leadership support, flexibility, and concern.*)

How do you balance respecting Cpl Howard's privacy and staying neutral while ensuring his safety and wellbeing?

- Check in with Cpl Howard.
- Talk to the SARC about additional services for Cpl Howard.
- Be open—trauma responses and recovery may look different for different people.
- Healing may look like time for yoga, acupuncture, meditation, or seeing the Chaplain, not just counseling or medical. Recent research shows yoga can be very effective for healing trauma.
- Ensure Cpl Howard's immediate chain of command supports him in engaging services while protecting his privacy.
- Remember trauma is not a one time occurrence. Significant dates, events, or even sights and smells can trigger trauma responses. Talk to your SARC about particularly difficult dates (following a court martial, anniversary dates, after a forensic exam) and consider making adjustments to Cpl Howard's workload or schedule.

**Question:** Read the FY20 SAPR Annual Report highlights in the column to the left out loud to the group. What are your reactions to that data?



# SAPR

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE

## Postvention

In FY20, Marine Corps SARC and SAPR VAs offered over 4,500 referrals to victims. These referrals include advocacy support, legal services, mental health, and chaplain support, among others.

SAPR data consistently demonstrate that the Expedited Transfers process is not abused. In FY20, the Marine Corps processed 80 ET requests; 91% of these were approved by either the victim's immediate Commander or following a General Officer review.

### Scenario

It's been several months since Cpl Howard filed the Unrestricted Report. He is continuing to struggle at work and with his physical fitness. At the Case Management Group, the SARC reports that Cpl Howard is starting to have problems with his peers. Soon after the CMG, your SARC brings you an Expedited Transfer request from Cpl Howard.

### Discussion

The intent of the Expedited Transfer policy is to address situations where a victim feels safe, but uncomfortable, and to assist in the victim's recovery by moving the victim to a new location. Many Marines hear about one person who "abused the system" which can lead to harmful misconceptions that people only use Expedited Transfers to get out of their current unit.

**Question:** What misconceptions have you heard? How can you address them?

- By policy, a presumption shall be established in favor of transferring a Service member following a credible report of sexual assault (determined by NCIS).
- The large majority of Expedited Transfers are approved.
- Reasons for denial could be because of a Marine's MOS or being on a legal/medical hold.
- Do not question the credibility of a report openly— instead, talk to your SJA.
- Disparaging comments about people "abusing" Expedited Transfers could create a message that your command does not believe or support sexual assault reports.
- These comments can lead to victim blaming.
- Trust the system. The purpose of an Expedited Transfer is to assist in recovery and ultimately we want our Marines to be mission ready no matter where they are.
- Establishing normalcy and regaining a sense of control is incredibly important after a sexual assault. An Expedited Transfer could help someone do that.

You have heard from several sources that there is gossip occurring in the command. Marines have dug into Cpl Howard's Instagram account, found pictures of the night of the promotion, and people are openly questioning whether a sexual assault "actually occurred."

**Question:** What do you do?

- Check in with Cpl Howard.
- Take it back to prevention: Go back to what you learned about healthy commands and focus on building skills like cohesion and respect.
- Acknowledge generational differences with social media. While comments on social media may be insignificant to you, many younger people place tremendous value on interpersonal interactions on social media.
- Talk to your SARC about training/materials to educate Marines on trauma and victimology.
- Discuss any retaliation concerns with your SJA.