



**Observation of Sexual Assault Response
Coordinator (SARC) and
Victim Advocate (VA) Sexual Assault
Prevention and Response Training**

Report to the U.S. Army

**Prepared by the Department of Defense Sexual Assault
Prevention and Response Office**

22 January 2013

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BACKGROUND

At the heart of the Department's sexual assault response program are the Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and SAPR Victim Advocates (VAs), who support victims throughout the reporting and response process. In 2010, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office began working with the Military Services to make revisions to DoD Instruction (DoDI) 6495.02, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Procedures*, including revisions to SARC and SAPR VA training requirements. The version of DoDI 6495.02 currently being processed for reissuance includes a requirement that all DoD sexual assault responders, including SARCs and SAPR VAs, shall receive the same baseline training in order to standardize services throughout the Department.

With the passage of Public Law 112-81, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, Congress underscored the importance of SARC and SAPR VA training by codifying into Federal law a mandate for the Secretary of Defense to establish a professional and uniform training and certification program for SARCs and SAPR VAs. In 2012, the Department established the DoD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP) to fulfill this requirement, standardize sexual assault victim advocacy across the Department, and professionalize the roles of the SARCs and VAs who perform victim advocacy duties. A key element of the D-SAACP is the evaluation and oversight of SARC and SAPR VA training that ensures the Department's victim advocacy core competencies are being realized and that the training complies with DoDI 6495.02 policy standards. The Services must have their training pre-approved by the D-SAACP Review Committee and SARCs and SAPR VAs must complete the training prior to applying for certification. This report is in response to the requirement in DoDI 6495.02 for Services and the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to submit a copy of their SAPR training programs, or SAPR training elements, to the USD(P&R) through SAPRO, for evaluation of consistency and compliance with DoD SAPR training standards contained in DoDI 6495.02*.

Another standardized document utilized is the DoD Standards for Victim Assistance Services, which was developed to establish a foundational level of victim assistance services while recognizing the distinct missions, skill sets, and responsibilities of the Department's various victim assistance-related programs. The Standards include both competency and ethical standards for DoD victim assistance personnel, including SARCs and SAPR VAs.

**Note, the DoD SAPRO team realizes that training requirements used to review this course include those outlined in the revised DoDI 6495.02, which has not yet been reissued as of the date of this report but is expected to be in the near term. However, the information provided in this report is intended to support the Army in meeting the requirements set forth in the revised version of the DoDI.*

APPROACH

DoD SAPRO deployed a team of military personnel, training experts, and a Victim Assistance Subject Matter Expert (SME) to review Army training for SARCs and SAPR VAs. The review focused on evaluating training practices and methods, as well as course content against the DoDI 6495.02*, DoD Standards for Victim Assistance Services, and the D-SAACP SARC/VA competency framework. The DoD SAPRO team validated the observations and ratings among six observers and compiled findings

on the strengths and recommendations of the Army's SARC/VA course for the development of this report.

The DoD SAPRO team reviewed the "Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program Certification Course for Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) SHARP Specialists and Victim Advocate (VA) SHARP Specialists" at Ft. Belvoir, VA on 4-15 June 2012.

The course is a two-week, eighty-hour course that focuses primarily on the topic of sexual harassment in the first week and sexual assault in the second week. The course culminates in a capstone exercise where students receive information about sexual harassment/assaults occurring in a unit and have to develop and brief an appropriate action plan to address the unit's needs. A Mobile Training Team (MTT) consisting of three instructors, one of which was in training, led the course. The course was held in a classroom setting and had approximately 50 SARCs and VAs in attendance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Army's SARC/VA course is supported by Senior Army leadership, leverages the expertise of highly qualified instructors and guest speakers, engages students, and provides coverage of relevant SARC/VA topics. The course provides SARCs/VAs with a good introduction to their roles and responsibilities and meets D-SAACP requirements. To improve, the Army should consider adding more instructors during practical exercises, creating new practical exercises and/or modifying existing ones, developing a quick reference guide, and ensuring the use of appropriate guest speakers. Factual errors and missing content will also need to be addressed. Details for each of the strengths and recommendations outlined below can be found in the Findings section of this report.

The Army SARC/VA course displayed strengths in coverage of particular topic areas. Strengths were also noted for detailed information specific to sexual assaults within the Army. These strengths include the following:

1. Senior Army leadership was present and expressed support for the SAPR program.
2. Guest speakers and SARCs were leveraged to share expertise and help SARCs/VAs create a network.
3. Practical exercises provided an opportunity to apply learning.
4. Experienced instructors contribute to the quality of the instruction.
5. Instructor and Student Guides are professional and provide excellent reference material.
6. Tests and evaluative exercises provide students with opportunities for reinforcement of knowledge comprehension and application.
7. Several training topics outlined in DoD policy were addressed well.

To improve SARC/VA training, the Army must apply training best practices and adult learning theory to create a more interactive and student-focused training course. Recommended areas for improvement include the following:

1. Increase instructor support to better manage practical exercises.
2. Review existing practical exercises to ensure course effectiveness.
3. Expand the use of practical exercises to improve learning outcomes.
4. Develop a quick reference guide for SARC/VA use after training.
5. Engage appropriate guest speakers to share knowledge and add value to the training.
6. Address factual errors/omissions in the course.
7. Review the updated DoDI 6495.02 when signed and add instruction on missing topics, as required.

FINDINGS

Strengths of Army SARC/VA Training

The Army SARC/VA course meets D-SAACP training requirements and has been approved by the National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) Review Committee to address required topics and the 40-hour time requirement. The strengths of the Army SARC/VA training include having a strong leadership presence, leveraging guest speakers, and employing some adult learning practices. Strengths identified during the course are outlined in detail below.

Training Practices and Methods

1. **Senior Army leadership was present and expressed support for the SAPR program.** Major General Linnington, Army Military District of Washington Commanding General, visited the class and spoke on the importance of the SHARP program, training and the duty that students' have to victims and military sexual trauma. Mr. Larry Stubblefield, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Diversity and Leadership, Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower & Reserve Affairs, was also present. Col. Griffith from Army G-1, Carolyn Collins, Director of the Army SHARP Program, and SGM Evy Lacy, Equal Opportunity Sergeant Major for the Commanding General, Army Accessions Command and Fort Knox, also attended and observed part of the course. Incorporating senior leadership presence during SARC/VA training is a best practice and demonstrates leadership commitment to the Army SHARP Program.
2. **Guest speakers and SARCs were leveraged to share expertise and help SARCs/VAs create a network.** Representatives from the Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID), Family Advocacy Program, and the Army SHARP Office (Carolyn Collins) provided an overview of their areas of responsibility, initiatives, and were available to answer students' questions. For example, Carolyn Collins spoke during the panel presentation about expedited transfers, the Victim Advocate Privilege Executive Order (MRE 514), Army SHARP initiatives and other SAPR programs. Students had an opportunity to check their understanding of the course material with these experts. There were also some experienced SARC students who contributed to the class by sharing examples and stories, and addressed

questions from new SARCs/VAs. Integrating guest speakers and experienced students in the SARC/VA training course is a best practice because it allows new SARCs/VAs to learn from experts and develop a network of professionals they will interface with on the job.

3. **Practical exercises provide an opportunity to apply learning.** The Army SARC/VA course provides several opportunities for students to ask questions, engage in small group discussions with peers and commanders, and complete practical exercises throughout the course. A few examples of effective practical exercises from the Army SARC/VA course are described below.
 - a. In a communications practical exercise, the instructor asked a student to come to the front of the room and ask the class to draw an object by describing it alone, and not showing it to the class. This exercise demonstrated that students may not always hear what is being said or that they may interpret the information differently.
 - b. In Module 10, healthcare management process, the slide “Initial Engagement” introduced a scenario for a victim and SARC/VA to role-play. The exercise provided a good review of the medical exam and what SARCs/VAs should tell a victim. The instructor provided great commentary preparing the class for the emotions SARCs/VAs would experience the first time they work with a victim as well as how to establish rapport and remove any barriers due to rank. This exercise energized the class and generated a lot of discussion. This exercise lasted one hour and was a very good use of students’ time.
4. **Experienced instructors contribute to the quality of the instruction.**
 - a. The instructor’s guide for the Army SARC/VA course outlines the following requirements and qualifications for instructors of the course: the instructor must have four years of college education, military experience, education/training experience, and experience as a SARC or victim advocate. Instructors must also present lessons to a Senior Instructor before they can facilitate a SARC/VA course to ensure they have the right knowledge, skills, and ability to train the course material. These requirements ensure the quality of instructors for the SARC/VA training.
 - b. The DoD SAPRO team observed that the instructors in the Army SARC/VA course kept the class engaged by frequently asking questions to gauge understanding and often referred students to handouts, directives, instructions and manuals to ensure everyone was familiar with the training materials. The instructors were prior Service members so they understand the Army culture, which adds credibility to the training course. The instructors demonstrated an expertise on Army regulations and the Army SHARP program. They repeated key messages throughout the course such as “you are a change agent” and “force behind the fight”, reinforcing the importance of the SARC/VA role and helped with team building. The same instructors teach all Army SARC/VA training courses, which contributes to the quality of the courses and ensures standardized training across the Army.

5. **Instructor and Student Guides are professional and provide students with excellent reference material.** The Army SARC/VA instructor's guide consists of two binders with slides, detailed instructor notes, copies of handouts, practical exercises, tests, and additional resources. It provides instructors with a comprehensive reference for how to deliver the training. The Army SARC/VA student guide contains copies of the slides and a section designed for notes. Both materials are very organized, and look polished and professional.
6. **Tests and evaluative exercises provide students with opportunities for reinforcement and application of knowledge.** The Army SARC/VA course uses graded tests and evaluative exercises to gauge students' understanding of the training material. The tests, which consist of 40-50 multiple-choice questions on sexual harassment and sexual assault, are a best practice because they require students to study in order to comprehend the material. The tests also add credibility to the SARC/VA course because students must pass them in order to become certified. The Army SARC/VA course also has two evaluative exercises at the end of the course. The first is a graded role-play scenario where students act as a SARC, VA, commander, and/or victim in a group. The role-play with VAs and victims is especially important because it serves as reinforcement of VA roles and responsibilities in working with victims. The second is a graded capstone exercise where students are given scenarios and need to develop and brief an action plan on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The capstone exercise is a best practice because it requires SARCs/VAs to apply extensive knowledge of the material covered in the class.

Training Content

7. **Several training topics outlined in DoD policy were addressed well.**
 - a. **Students were provided several opportunities to practice completing the DD Form 2910.** The DD Form 2910, Victim Reporting Preference Statement, was covered thoroughly in the course. The form was first completed block-by-block as a group, then in pairs. It is critical for SARCs/VAs to understand how to complete this form when working with victims. The course provided excellent opportunities for students to practice this skill.
 - b. **Instructors covered optional training content outlined in the DoDD 1030.1 and DoDI 1030.2.** The Army SARC/VA course is one of the only SARC/VA courses where instructors reviewed the DoDD 1030.1, Victim and Witness Assistance, and DoDI 1030.2, Victim and Witness Assistance Procedures. This directive and instruction are important because the SARC/VA needs to let victims know about their rights, so that they feel more empowered especially for an unrestricted report (e.g., so that they can be a better witness and be able to get through the trauma).
 - c. **Instructors thoroughly discussed SARC/VA qualifications.** The Army SARC/VA course spent time highlighting the importance of the qualifications that SARCs/VAs must meet in order to be successful in their role. The instructors spent time explaining that SARCs/VAs needed to not only be victim-focused and sympathetic, but also to behave in an ethical manner, respect professional boundaries, and be accountable.

- d. **The victim impact statement was explained in the course.** The Army SARC/VA course was one of the only courses that covered the victim impact statement (VIS). This topic is important because SARCs/VAs need to explain to victims that they may be called upon to write a VIS. The SARC/VA may also be asked to help a victim draft a VIS.
- e. **The course included a discussion on the SAFE kit chain of custody.** The instructors stressed the importance of SARCs/VAs following a chain of custody for SAFE kits for restricted and unrestricted reports. The experienced SARC students in the class also reinforced that SARCs/VAs should not interfere with the handling of the SAFE kit (e.g., not transporting the kit for any reason as it could be viewed as tampering and may be inadmissible in court).

Recommendations for Army SARC/VA Training

While the Army SARC/VA course addresses many of the topics outlined in policy, improvements are needed to create a more victim-focused course and engage students in active learning exercises using adult learning theory principles (e.g. Malcolm Knowles), as required by the forthcoming version of the DoDI 6495.02. Recommendations to improve the Army SARC/VA course include adding more instructors during practical exercises, adding and/or expanding practical exercises, developing a quick reference guide, ensuring appropriate guest speakers, addressing errors and reviewing the forthcoming DoDI 6495.02 to ensure the training meets DoD policy requirements.

Training Practices and Methods

1. **Increase instructor support to better manage practical exercises.** The DoD SAPRO team observed that the instructor to student ratio (~ 25 students to 1 instructor) worked well for lecture-based presentations but caused issues during some of the practical exercises. At times, students did not receive enough individualized attention needed to meet the intended objective of the exercise. For example, during the capstone exercise and some breakouts, it was difficult for the instructors to be available when needed for the critiques. As students waited for the instructors, some engaged in side conversations and/or spent time on non-class activities, which detracted attention from the course. The Army should consider increasing the number of instructors during practical exercises to allow for more oversight and to create an experience that is more engaging for students. This recommendation also applies for the evaluative portions of the training (e.g., graded exercises and tests).
2. **Review existing practical exercises to ensure course effectiveness.** The course includes some opportunities for students to practice skills they will be expected to perform as a SARC/VA; however, the Army needs to review the existing practical exercises to ensure they can be easily controlled by the instructor and are engaging for the students. Some observations and recommendations for the current practical exercises include:
 - a. **The DoD SAPRO team recommends a “Go/No Go” evaluation of the SARC/VA victim response during the role-play.** This is a critical block of instruction where students learn how to respond to a victim of sexual assault. This evaluation should be used to determine whether an individual student is able to maturely and competently

about where victims can receive a SAFE exam, contact information for various POCs and/or agencies, copies of memorandums of understanding (MOUs), and a list of victim web resources among other references. This guide would enable SARCs/VAs to help victims obtain access to information and/or resources more quickly and efficiently, and lessen the need for SARCs/VAs to have to contact the victim at a later date and time that may not be convenient. Each student could receive a copy of this guide in addition to the student guide that is already provided during class.

5. **Engage appropriate guest speakers to share knowledge and add value to the training.**

- a. **Involve additional speakers in the panel.** The Judge Advocate General (JAG), healthcare providers (medical and mental health), and chaplain were not present during the panel discussion and are recommended for future iterations so that students can gain knowledge from these experts and develop relationships. The JAG should present during the panel and discuss the uniform code of military justice (UCMJ) portion of the content, if/when feasible. In addition, the JAG should consider providing instruction on the definition of consent, MRE 514, Sexual Assault Initial Disposition Authority, collateral misconduct, benefits of victims seeing a Legal Assistance Attorney, and policy references such as the DTM 11-062 and DTM 11-063. If available, a VWAP representative could also speak to SARCs/VAs about their role and that of victims' rights.
- b. **Review existing speakers to ensure fit.** The Army should review the current speakers that attended the course to ensure they are still a fit for the class. For example, the family advocacy program (FAP) speaker is no longer needed. The Army SHARP program once belonged under FAP but no longer does. The Army should also confirm speaker qualifications to present the subject matter. The DoD SAPRO team observed that the CID agent that was present did not appear to understand special victim capability.
- c. **Continue to leverage experienced SARCs/VAs during class.** The DoD SAPRO team noticed that experienced SARCs were present in the class and saw how instrumental they were in answering students' questions and sharing examples and experiences that added to the richness of the training. The Army may want to consider including experienced SARCs/VAs as mentors or presenters in future courses. For example, the local SARC could be present during the course.

Training Content

1. **Address factual errors/omissions in the course.**

- a. The instructor instructed that the SARC has confidentiality and not privileged communication. This error would be resolved by adding instruction on MRE 514.
- b. It was stated during the course that the VA would need to complete 16 hours of training per year for two years to reach the credentialing requirement of 32 hours. The

actual requirement is to complete 32 hours of training in two years. It does not have to be 16 hours per year.

- c. In Module 9 on the investigation and legal process, the information about victim assistance programs and crime victim compensation is not completely accurate. During the class, the instructor mentioned that there is no financial help for victims, and was seemingly unaware that each State has a compensation program. The instructor also did not know about prosecutor-based victim assistance programs and was not able to explain them accurately.
 - d. In Module 13 on outreach, the “Resource” slide needs to include the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) to comply with the D-SAACP requirement. More information about NOVA is available at www.trynova.org.
2. **Review the updated DoDI 6495.02 when signed and add instruction on missing topics, as required.**
- a. **Add a block of instruction for conducting SAPR training.** The need for SARCs/VAs to conduct SAPR training was briefly mentioned during the course; however, students were not given further guidance on how to conduct this training nor did they receive training materials for this purpose. At a minimum, teaching SAPR training should be discussed in more detail and materials should be provided during the course. Ideally, students should get a chance to practice delivering the training in front of the instructor or peers for critique. They should also be provided with strategies for how to conduct SAPR training.
 - b. **Provide a short brief on the SAPR Policy Toolkit** located on the www.sapr.mil website. The SAPR Toolkit was briefly mentioned in the class but should be expanded so students understand the resources they have available to them on the job.
 - c. **Ensure students are trained on Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID).** The instructors attempted to explain DSAID during the Army SARC/VA course but the explanation was not entirely clear. Instructors should be able to explain to students how they can get training on DSAID, if they are not already trained
 - d. **Add instruction on MRE 514** per the DoDI 6495.02 requirement. This topic was not presented formally in the course. Carolyn Collins briefly mentioned MRE 514 during the panel discussion.
 - e. **Add instruction on the following healthcare topics from the DoDI 6495.02:** (1) explain the translation of the forensic exam findings, which refers to a criminal investigator explaining to the victim the evidence found in the forensic exam, and (2) discuss the proper medical management of the alleged offender.
 - f. **Add instruction on the DD Form 2701** as it is not covered during the course. The form was only discussed when it was brought up by a student. The SARC/VA needs to provide victims in restricted reporting cases with a copy of the DD Form 2701 and

tell the victims that the form contains a copy of their victim rights should they elect to switch to unrestricted reporting, which includes the right to confer with the prosecutor in the case. SARCs/VAs need to inform victims that their rights begin at the outset of an unrestricted report, and can be explained by the VWAP representative and exercised through their victim-witness assistance personnel.

- g. **Add instruction on how the SARC will comply with the D-SAACP** as outlined on www.sapr.mil, by applying for DoD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification, as required by the DoDI 6495.02. At the time of this course observation, the D-SAACP requirement was not definitive. The program was briefly mentioned but no additional information was provided to SARCs/VAs. The Army will need to update instruction to ensure the D-SAACP is covered in more detail. Information about D-SAACP can be found on www.sapr.mil.
- h. **Explain the importance of Reserves (Title 10) duty status when providing services to victims.** The Army SARC/VA course should provide information on the importance of Reserve duty status (Title 10) and discuss how to handle sexual assault cases depending on the duty status of the victim. All [Service] SARC/VAs could potentially be required to provide services to Reserve victims and students should be prepared to handle the possible cases they will face, including the complicated scenarios under which a sexual assault may occur in the Reserves. A possible example includes the following:
 - i. A Service member is drilling over the weekend and the individual is sexually assaulted at the Armory, which is located off-post in their respective state. What type of support/services is the victim entitled to? Who investigates? MCIO will not cover this. Local law enforcement will be authorized to take it. However, what if the incident involves touching someone over his or her clothes? The UCMJ covers this under our umbrella of Article 120. Civilian authorities would not cover this offense.