



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

**Report to the U.S. Air Force**

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

**31 January 2013**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND .....	2
APPROACH .....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
FINDINGS .....	5
Strengths of Air Force SARC/VA Training .....	5
Training Practices and Methods .....	5
Training Content .....	6
Recommendations for Air Force SARC/VA Training.....	7
Training Practices and Methods .....	7
Training Content .....	9

## 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, which 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 standard document utilized was 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.

*\* 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. The purpose of this report is to support the Air Force in meeting the requirements set forth in the revised version of the DoDI.*

## Approach

DoD SAPRO deployed a team of military personnel, training experts, to review the Air Force training for Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Victim Advocates (VAs). The review focused on instructional strategies and evaluated the course subject matter against DoD Instruction (DoDI) 6495.02\*, the Standards for Victim Assistance Services, and the National Organization for Victim

Assistance (NOVA) SARC/VA competency framework. The DoD SAPRO team validated the observations and ratings among observers and compiled findings on the strengths and recommendations of the Air Force's SARC/VA course for the development of this report.

The DoD SAPRO team reviewed the SARC/VA course at Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery AL on 5-9 November 2012. The five-day course consisted of presentations, group activities, and videos. The course was facilitated by an experienced team of SAPR experts, including the Air Force SAPR Operations Manager. Subject Matter Expert (SME) presentations included a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), members of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) staff, Military Criminal Investigation Organization (MCIO) staff, and Air Force SAPR program team members.

## Executive Summary

The Air Force SARC/VA training provided students the benefits of learning from expert instructors who clearly knew their subject material. In additions, experienced SARCs shared their experiences, lessons learned, and best practices in class presentations and break-out discussion groups. Some topics that were thoroughly addressed included overviews of Air Force sexual assault reporting and confidentiality policies, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) sexual assault definitions, SARC responsibilities, SAPR program administration, military evidentiary requirements, legal proceedings, psychology of victim trauma, criminal investigative processes, and ideas for marketing the SAPR program. In addition, the course met the minimum 40-hour time requirements for courses provided to prepare SARCs and VAs for the DoD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (DSAACP), as required by the forthcoming version of the DoDI 6495.02.

To improve the SARC/VA course the Air Force must apply training best practices and adult learning theory (e.g. Malcolm Knowles), as required by the forthcoming version of the DoDI 6495.02, to create a more interactive and student-focused training course that will ensure students can apply what they have learned in their new job roles. To apply adult learning theory, instructors and guest presenters should teach the required course content by showing students how the information can be applied in their work as SARCs/VAs and more time must be devoted to role-playing interactions with victims, commanders, and other Sexual assault response team-members, such as healthcare, Victim and Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) staff, and legal staff. Reliance on slide presentations must be greatly reduced. Presenters should follow a detailed content outline in an instructor guide. Air Force should also review the amount of class time spent on each subject area. Much of the detailed theory and background information can be provided on a DVD for the student's later reference. Checks-on-learning should be employed to ensure students comprehend and can apply the information learned. The result will be a course that will better prepare SARCs and VAs to perform their responsibilities after training.

- a. The effective training practices and methods employed in the current Air Force SARC/VA course include the following:
  1. The instructor team included outside experts who offered valuable insights into the SAPR program and how to successfully perform SARC/VA responsibilities.

2. Students benefited from the guidance of experienced Air Force SARCs who shared their SAPR program strategies and experience.
- b. The Air Force SARC/VA course introduced relevant and useful training topics, including the following:
1. Air Force sexual assault reporting and confidentiality policies
  2. Overview of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) sexual assault definitions
  3. Overview of SARC responsibilities and program administration
  4. Overview of legal procedures and military judicial evidentiary requirements
  5. Overview of crime victim psychological trauma, VA helping skills, and VA self-care
  6. Overview of the criminal investigative process
  7. Marketing and advocating for the SAPR program

To improve SARC/VA training, the Air Force should implement the following recommendations, including:

1. Build into the course more practical exercises to prepare students to successfully perform their new role as SARCs/VAs.
2. Reduce the reliance on slides in the course.
3. Re-focus training presentations on demonstrating to students how each topic relates to successfully completing their new SARC and VA responsibilities.
4. Review the amount of class time spent on each subject area to ensure the appropriate amount of attention is provided to each subject area.
5. Ensure students have copies of the slides and other handouts at the beginning of class so they can take notes and become familiar with the resources they will use when in their new job.
6. Add checks-on-learning throughout the course to ensure students comprehend and can apply the information learned in each block of instruction.
7. Review the forthcoming DoDI 6495.02, and D-SAACP's core competency framework and professional code of ethics and ensure all training requirements for SARCs are addressed in the course.
8. Address factual errors presented in the course.

## Findings

### Strengths of Air Force SARC/VA Training

The Air Force's SARC/VA training employed training practices that provided students the benefits of learning from expert instructors who clearly knew their subject material, as well as experienced SARCs who shared their experiences, lessons learned, and best practices in class presentations and break-out discussion groups. The course introduced topics important to the SARC/VA role. The course also meets the minimum time requirements for the D-SAACP for all SARCs and VAs.

Strengths of the course identified through our observations include the following training practices and methods and training content:

### Training Practices and Methods

1. **Best Practice. SAPR SMEs presented accurate information that will be valuable to SARCs/VAs in their new job role.** The SMEs who briefed the particularly complex modules (e.g. investigations, Air Force policy, and forensic examinations) ensured students received valuable and accurate information to enable them to communicate accurately to their commander, command personnel, and victims in particular. For example:
  - a. **Mr. James Russell**, Air Force SAPR expert, provided a wealth of information on Air Force policy, UCMJ definitions and their application, legal procedures for sexual assaults, and military judicial evidentiary requirements. Mr. Russell's expertise helped establish the validity and value of the information presented the Air Force course.
  - b. **Ms. Rebekah Downs**, Air Force SAPR Operations Manager, facilitated the course and added to the students' understanding of the Air Force SAPR program as well as the basic concepts of sexual assault.
  - c. **Dr. Leslie Leibowitz**, victim trauma expert, presented a great amount of information and expertise on the psychological trauma experienced by victims of crime and the helping skills that seem to assist victims in getting the care they need and move on to recover and survive. Dr. Leibowitz's expertise helped establish the validity and value of the information presented the Air Force course.
  - d. **Mr. Ramon Morado**, Air Force Special Investigations Agent, presented a very clear and focused overview of the criminal investigative process. He clearly knew the important aspects of the process to communicate to SARCs/VAs. Agent Morado's expertise helped establish the validity and value of the information presented the Air Force course.
  - e. **Ms. Cheryl Hardley**, Air Force Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, described the process for conducting a sexual assault forensic exam (SAFE) and provided insight into the experience from the victim perspective.

2. **Best Practice. Students benefited from the guidance of experienced Air Force SARC instructors** who shared their SAPR program strategies for success, lessons learned, best practices, stories, and experiences. For example:
  - a. Role-play of an interview of a victim by a SARC/VA was demonstrated in class by the instructors, demonstrating for students the appropriate techniques to use in victim communications during crisis intervention.
  - b. Role-play of a Case Management Group (CMG) meeting provided students with a great example of how the meeting should be conducted and the types of discussions that should occur during the meeting.
  - c. Break-out discussion groups were led by experienced SARC instructors who facilitated discussions, answered questions, and coached students in role play exercises
  - d. Experienced SARC instructors (e.g. Janaee Stone, Debbie Allen, LaNesa Howard) led several class blocks of instruction, covering SARC responsibilities, SAPR program administration, SAPR program promotion, and fulfilling training requirements.
  - e. Participants also contributed personal stories and helped to create a collaborative learning environment.
3. **Pre-read material.** Students were required to read “The Phenomenology of Rape, and It Takes a Village to Rape a Woman.” Pre-reading these articles ensured that the students were ready to benefit from the material presented in class.

## Training Content

1. **Air Force sexual assault reporting and confidentiality policies.** Mr. Russell provided a detailed overview of DoD policy on reporting, MRE 514, and the legal aspects governing privileged communications between victims and SARC/VAs.
2. **Overview of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) sexual assault definitions.** Mr. Russell provided a detailed description of the UCMJ definitions and asked students to discriminate situations that meet the definition of consent.
3. **Overview of SARC responsibilities and program administration.** Ms. Janaee Stone described the programmatic aspects of the SARC job role to help ensure new SARCs will be aware of the types of programmatic tasks required to set up a new SAPR program.
4. **Overview of legal procedures and military judicial evidentiary requirements.** Mr. Russell provided an excellent overview of the legal process, evidentiary requirements, and the role of staff judge advocates.
5. **Overview of crime victim psychological trauma, VA helping skills, and VA self-care.** Dr. Leslie Leibowitz provided an introduction to the Phenomenology of Rape and the impact of sexual assault on crime victims, including the fragmentation of crime victim memory, as well as how victim advocates can help victims of crime while taking care of themselves at the same time.
6. **Overview of the criminal investigative process.** Agent Morado described the process and tactics of criminal investigations.

7. **Marketing and advocating for the SAPR program.** Ms. Janaee Stone presented tactics and strategies for advocating and promoting the SAPR program.
8. **Video on Recantation of Reports.** The video explained the difference between false reports and recantation of reports. It helped clarify an important distinction for the students.
9. **Secrets Exercise.** Students experienced how victims might feel about protecting their confidentiality, IOW, the potential for re-traumatization when secrets are exposed by other parties.

## Recommendations for Air Force SARC/VA Training

While the Air Force SARC/VA course addressed many required topics, improvements can be made to create a more victim-focused course and engage students in active learning experiences, providing students the opportunity to process new information and practice new skills. Recommendations to improve the Air Force SARC/VA course include the following:

### Training Practices and Methods

1. **Build more practical exercises into the course to prepare students to successfully perform their new role as SARCs/VAs.** Apply adult learning principles and revise the course to include exercises that require students to apply their knowledge and skills in active learning exercises. For example:
  - a. **Role-Play Victim Interaction.** Students should be evaluated on their victim assistance skills by an expert instructor. The exercise could be conducted as follows: Students should spend a period of time preparing for the exercise by practicing with their peers acting in the role of a victim advocate in an interaction with a victim, explaining the DD Form 2910 to the victim. Then each student should execute the role of the VA, explaining the DD Form 2910 to a victim played by an instructor. Instructors should provide critiques of each student's role-play of the VA role. Students should also observe their peers' role-plays and critiques. Each student should then be given a 'Go' or 'No-Go' evaluation in the exercise and retrained and retested if necessary. Additional experienced instructors may be required to help conduct the exercise to ensure each student has an opportunity to execute the role-play.
  - b. **Ethics Discussions.** Students require practice applying their knowledge of SARC/VA responsibilities while complying with ethical standards. The instructor should ask 'what would you do?' questions to require students to apply their knowledge of victim advocacy ethics to hypothetical scenarios, while considering the ethical issues for victim advocates that arise in each situation. Class discussions are a valuable active learning experience. There is great value in students sharing their personal stories and experience with each other to address the spectrum of issues they must consider in supporting victims in an ethical manner while adhering to Air Force and DoD policies.

- c. **Practice SARC/VA Responsibilities.** To successfully execute their SAPR program and victim advocacy skills, students must be provided the opportunity to apply SAPR concepts in realistic SARC and VA job situations. As new SARC responsibilities are introduced in course blocks 13, 14, 15, and 18, those introductions should be followed by short scenarios that require the students to apply what they have learned. In addition, the responsibilities of VA should be specifically addressed to ensure VAs are ready to transfer what they have learned to their new job role. Discussions could focus on the actions the SARC or VA would take at each step in the process, and the instructor can share best practices.
2. **Reduce the reliance on slides in the course.** The course is presented primarily through lecture format with the use of slides. This format does not support an active learning environment in which students process new information and apply new concepts and skills to ensure they comprehend and can apply what they have learned. The Air Force should revise course presentations to focus class time on active learning activities, such as case studies, small group discussions, role-play exercises, and short scenario knowledge-checks. The detailed information from each instructor can be placed on the course student DVD, so that students can take it with them and use it for later reference. For example, blocks 2 and 3 are presented through 189 slides. Topic-by-topic review of this block of instruction will help focus class presentation on the most important information and the remainder can be referenced by the students from the DVD.
3. **Provide an Instructor Guide for all instructors.** Instructors should be provided an Instructor Guide that they are required to follow, detailing their required teaching points and the interactive learning activities to be included in their block of instruction. This will ensure all presentations cover the required topics and objectives from the perspective of the SARC or VA role. These suggested topics should relate directly to the responsibilities of the SARC or VA role. This will also ensure all presentations are structured appropriately and streamlined for the most effective use of time during the course. Guest instructors should focus on how the SARC or VA interacts with the respective office or organization providing the briefing.
4. **Re-focus training presentations on demonstrating to students how each topic relates to successfully completing SARC and VA responsibilities.** Apply adult learning principles to focus training on describing the relevancy of each topic to the SARC or VA role. The guest instructors address their content well, but their presentations do not relate the information to the role of the SARC/VA.
5. **Review the focus and amount of class time spent on each subject area.** The DoD SAPRO team recommends a review of the amount of time allotted to each presentation and activity to ensure the proper emphasis is placed on the topics most relevant to a new SARC or VA, while ensuring the course covers all the training topics required by the DoDI 6495.02. Some course topics were not provided appropriate time and others were emphasized more than necessary. For example, Dr. Leibowitz's presentation required the entire fourth day of training. While she is obviously an expert in her subject, the class time with Dr. Leibowitz may be better spent interacting with her in practical exercises and getting feedback from her in victim/victim advocate role-play exercises. We recommend shortening and focusing her lecture on the key points, and involving her with the class in more interactive activities.

6. **Ensure students have copies of the slides and class materials at the beginning of class.** Having the materials at the start of class will allow students to take notes on the slides and become familiar with the resources they will use later in their new job
7. **Add checks-on-learning throughout the course.** Checks-on-learning will ensure students comprehend and can apply the information learned in each block of instruction. After each block of instruction, require students to apply what they have learned by asking questions to ensure they understand the information in the proper context, and discuss responses with peers and instructors to deepen their knowledge. This was done by Mr. Jim Russell when teaching the MRE 514.

## Training Content

**Ensure all requirements for SARC and VA training are addressed.** Many specific requirements for SARCs and VAs as well as SAPR programs are included in the new version of the DoDI currently in revision. Ensure the Air Force SARC/VA course meets all listed requirements and properly prepares them to perform their new job role. In particular, more time should be spent on the following topics:

1. **Add detailed instruction on how the SARC/VA will comply with the D-SAACP** by applying for DoD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification, as required by the DoDI 6495.02. In the course, it was mentioned but no additional information was provided.
2. **Add instruction on ethics.** As part of the D-SAACP certification, SARCs/VAs sign an ethical charter. The course should provide SARCs/VAs with instruction on ethics and include an activity to practice ethical behavior. For example, students could be provided a case study with an ethical dilemma and asked to share what they would do in the particular situation. A follow-on group discussion may reveal further ethical issues that SARCs/VAs could encounter in their role.
3. **Add more instruction on interpersonal communications.** Interpersonal communication skills are important to the SARC/VA role. SARCs/VAs need a chance to practice the skills necessary to listen to survivors, de-escalate crisis situations, and adjust their communication style based on how the information is received by survivors. Many of these items could be covered during an expanded role-play practical exercise as described above. Existing communications-related content in the course (e.g. the optional role-plays conducted during the Breakout sessions) should be expanded to require all students to practice their interpersonal communication skills with feedback and coaching from an experienced SARC. The role-plays could also be more effective if they were conducted earlier in the day. The students seemed tired at 1700 when most of the role-plays were conducted.
4. **Provide an exercise in which students explain the DD Form 2910 to a victim.** Air Force SARC/VAs are required to use the DD Form 2910 to explain to victims their reporting options and record their reporting choice. This was not explained clearly to all students in the class. Require each student to practice and then role-play explaining to a victim the DD Form 2910, including the exceptions to restricted reporting, with feedback and coaching from an expert instructor.
5. **Provide clear instructions on how to use Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID).** The instructor introduced DSAID during the course but there was no hands-on

practice on the system and the instructor could not be sure whether students understood how to use the application. The course should also cover the policy requirements for data recording suspense in the DSAID and any other technical requirements on data recording.

6. **Provide expert guidance on strategies and information on available materials for conducting SAPR training.** The need for SARCs/VAs to conduct SAPR training was covered in Block 19, 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, conducting 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 more strategies for how to conduct SAPR training.
7. **Provide a short brief on the DoD SAPR Resources including the DoD Safe Helpline and the SAPR Policy Toolkit** located on the [www.sapr.mil](http://www.sapr.mil) website. The SAPR Toolkit was briefly mentioned in the class but should be expanded so students understand all the resources they have available to them on the job.
8. **Add instruction on the DD Form 2701** since it is not covered during the course. The course should explain how the SARC/VA will 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 legal assistance and counsel staff about their case. Victims should be informed that the victim's rights can be explained by the Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) representative.
9. **Include more discussion of the commanders' responsibilities in victim care.** Although the commander's responsibilities are mentioned throughout the course, more thorough coverage of the commander's role in victim care and support should be provided to SARCs. This coverage should include ensuring the MCIO is contacted for unrestricted reports, dealing with victim and alleged offender collateral misconduct, protecting victims, witnesses, and victim advocates from reprisal or retaliation, keeping the victim informed about judicial or administrative punishment activities and progress, military protective orders (MPOs) (already covered), and expedited transfers (already covered). SARCs need to be aware of commander responsibilities since they support their commander in implementation of the SAPR program.
10. **Add additional items to the SAFE presentation.** While the SANE nurse provided a detailed presentation of the forensic physical exam that enabled SARCs to understand what a survivor could expect, this section should include detail of DD Form 2911 and the storage requirements for the form as part of the case file.
11. **Add or correct the following required training topics.** In some cases material is missing. In other cases either the materials or the way they were explained was incorrect.
  - a. Under MRE 514, communications with victims should be referred to as "privileged" not "covered".
  - b. Restricted reports should not be referred to as "Confidential" reports.
  - c. Independent investigations should not be referred to as "independent reports."
  - d. DD Form 2910 document storage requirements are 5 years, not 1 year.

- e. Add material on the requirements from DTMs 062 and 063.
  - f. Expand the discussion of self-care to ensure students understand how to maintain a professional distance from victims (healthy boundaries) and not be considered the friend by the victim.
  - g. Correct the material on expedited transfers in theater. Expedited transfers must be allowed in theater.
  - h. Add coverage of the following DD Forms: 2909, 2907 (discussed – show the document), and 2911.
12. **Explain the importance of Reserves (Title 10) duty status when providing services to victims.** The 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. We suggest the following example:

*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 their clothes? The UCMJ covers this under our umbrella of Article 120. Civilian authorities would not cover this offense.*