



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

Report to the National Guard Bureau

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

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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 (SAPRO) 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 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 were 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 subject 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 NGB 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 NGB training for SARCs and SAPR VAs. The review focused on evaluating instructional practices and methods as well as course content against the DoDI 6495.02*, the 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 NGB's SARC/VA course for the development of this report.

The DoD SAPRO team reviewed the "National Guard Bureau Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) Course" at the NGB in Arlington Virginia on 26-30 November 2012. Approximately 35 students attended, including both SARCs and VAs. The five-day course consisted of presentations, group activities, videos, scenarios, and role-plays involving six case studies. Class discussion focused on the complexities of the NGB and the possible combinations of duty statuses of victims and offenders. An experienced SARC/VA instructed the course and provided best practices and stories from her years of experience in the field. Guest instructors also provided subject-specific presentations, and included a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) from a local civilian hospital, members of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) staff, Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) staff, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) staff, and various other NGB SAPR program members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NGB's SARC/VA training meets D-SAACP requirements, provides SARCs/VAs with an introduction to their responsibilities, and discusses the intricacies of sexual assaults within NGB. The course employs a few excellent practical exercises to engage students and contains effective coverage of some relevant topics. To improve the course, NGB could focus on providing practical exercises for SARCs/VAs to gain the skills necessary to provide victim support, communicate with command leadership, and provide required training within their command. Further improvements can be made by expanding practical exercises, including more victim response in role-play exercises, and implementing more elements of adult learning theory. Details of these items can be found in the Findings section below.

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

1. The course provides realistic and expert information for NGB SARCs/VAs.
2. The course employs some elements of adult learning theory.
3. Detailed discussions examine the intricacies of duty status when providing services to victims.
4. Effective practical exercises, 'Values Clarification' and 'Forced Choices,' address personal biases.
5. The course places focus on updated and relevant topics.

To improve SARC/VA training, the NGB should 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. Expand the role-play practical exercise to ensure all students practice new skills.

2. Involve students in practical exercises while reducing lecture.
3. Focus training on describing the relevancy of the topic to the SARC/VA role.
4. Improve course training materials.
5. Expand upon and add practical exercises to address missing topics.
6. Ensure guest instructors present information applicable to coordination with the SARCs/VAs.
7. Revise content and timing to place focus on SARC/VA responsibilities.
8. Address factual errors.

FINDINGS

Strengths of NGB SARC/VA Training

The NGB's SARC/VA training strengths include coverage of relevant topics for NGB and use of practical exercises. The NGB course meets D-SAACP training requirements and has been approved by the National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) Review Committee to address required topics and meet the 40-hour time requirement for SARC/VA training. The course also implements a few training best practices. Strengths identified during the course are outlined below.

Training Practices and Methods

1. **The course provides realistic and expert information for NGB SARCs/VAs.**
 - a. **Case studies provide realistic scenarios.** Case studies are introduced on Day 2 and are used throughout the week as students act out role-play scenarios between a victim and a VA. On Day 5, students discuss and review each case study. Questions posed by the instructor about the case study and the resulting discussions summarize topics throughout the past week and provide students the opportunity to apply the knowledge they gained throughout the course in the context of realistic sexual assault cases.
 - b. **Guest instructors provide subject-matter expertise in their presentations.** Bringing guest instructor SMEs to brief particularly complex modules (e.g. investigation, military law, equal employment opportunity, and forensic examinations) facilitates an understanding of the services and expertise each organization can offer to victims of sexual assault. The guest instructors ensure students receive the most accurate information and their presentations build credibility with new SARCs/VAs by demonstrating they are experts in their field and trusted partners. In particular, presentations by an Army JAG and an Air Force JAG reviewed Uniform Code of Military Justice (UMCJ) definitions, discussed how their respective service addresses the crime of sexual assault, and included discussion of local laws to consider. These two presentations offered the students the opportunity to understand the nuances between the Air National Guard and Army National Guard.
2. **The course employs some elements of adult leaning theory.**
 - a. **A mix of instructional strategies offers students multiple methods to learn.** Using videos, presentation, practical exercises, and discussions, the course provides training using multiple styles to meet the varying learning preferences of students. The mix of strategies also breaks up a day filled with lecture and keeps the attention of students.

- b. **Importance is placed on the SARC/VA role.** The welcome by BG Watson on the morning of Day 1 provides leadership support to the course and the SARC/VA role and emphasizes the importance of SARC/VA responsibilities at NGB. ‘The Phenomenology of Rape’ homework reading assignment and the PBS video ‘NOW: 9/7/2007: Military Sexual Trauma’ communicate many powerful stories from both male and female Service members that were sexually assaulted. These messages create an emotional response and further support the importance of the SARC/VA role.
- c. **Students benefit from personal stories and experience.** The primary instructor is an experienced SARC who shares personal stories and experiences that contribute to the learning of key topics in the training. She communicates what not to say to a victim by recalling a conversation from her past and allowing students to learn from her mistake. Other students also contribute with personal stories and create a collaborative learning environment.
- d. **VAs and SARCs attend breakout sessions.** During the week, SARCs and VAs are separated for breakout sessions specific to their role. When conducting a combined SARC/VA course, this is a good practice to ensure each group clearly understands their job-specific roles and responsibilities, and instructors can focus on building job-specific skills.

Training Content

1. **Detailed discussions examine the intricacies of duty status when providing services to victims.** The guest instructors differentiate between NGB statuses (Title 10, Title 32, and State Active Duty (SAD)) and discuss how to handle each sexual assault case depending on the duty status of the victim. This level of detail sparks discussion and prepares students to handle the possible cases they will face, including the sometimes complicated scenarios under which a sexual assault may occur in the NGB.
2. **Effective practical exercises, ‘Values Clarification’ and ‘Forced Choices,’ address personal biases.** The ‘Values Clarification’ exercise requires students to listen to a short story, answer questions, and discuss responses as a group revealing personal biases that can affect decision-making and victim care. This activity effectively demonstrates how students bring their personal biases to the SARC/VA role. A discussion following the activity addresses the importance of awareness and control of personal biases when working with victims. ‘Forced Choices’ gave students the opportunity to examine how decisions are based on personal values and beliefs and concludes with a discussion addressing how to remove personal bias when working with victims.
3. **The course places focus on updated and relevant topics.**
 - a. **The SARC/VA course includes recently updated content.** The course includes the most current and factual information with regard to sexual assault in the Military. The majority of briefs contain updated information on Directive Type Memorandums, Executive Orders, Chief, National Guard Bureau Instructions, Air Force Instructions, Air Force Policy Directives, and Army Regulations. Course materials and slides also include the most up-to-date information on UCMJ definitions and processes, including the definition of consent, the definition of sexual assault, victim advocate privilege under MRE-514, and line of duty (LOD) determinations.
 - b. **The Chief, National Guard Bureau Office of Complex Administrative Investigations (OI) supports NGB members.** The OI is a new NGB initiative that provides a capability to perform complex administrative investigations at the request of The Adjutants General (TAG). The OI demonstrates a strong commitment and partnership with the TAG,

Military Criminal Investigation Organization (MCIO), and members of law enforcement. By describing the role and benefits of the OI during training, new SARCs/VAs can inform victims of all their options and be prepared to serve victims in any duty status.

- c. **Comprehensive instruction addresses offender behavior.** The ‘Offender Behavior and Tactics’ module presented on Day 3 contains strong instruction on predator behavior. This information allows SARCs/VAs to understand behavior patterns and myths often associated with offenders. Understanding offenders and offender behavior can help SARCs/VAs educate other Service members and address the self-blame many victims experience.
- d. **Course places focus on male victims.** The coverage of male victims is a benchmark for the NGB SARC/VA course, focusing on a demographic of sexual assault victims that requires more emphasis. The presentation addresses myths associated with male victims, stresses the increased risk for male victims who also suffer from PTSD and/or alcohol abuse, and emphasizes the importance to provide the proper resources to male victims and put biases aside.

Recommendations for NGB SARC/VA Training

Improvements should be made to the NGB SARC/VA course to create a more interactive and student-focused course, provide opportunities for students to practice new skills, and engage students in active learning exercises using adult learning theory (e.g. Malcolm Knowles) as required by the forthcoming version of the DoDI 6495.02. Recommendations to improve the NGB SARC/VA course include addition and expansion of practical exercises, coverage of all topics from the perspective of the relationship to the SARC/VA role, and creation of an outline for guest instructors.

Training Practices and Methods

1. **Expand the role-play practical exercise to ensure all students practice new advocacy skills.** The role-play exercise employs realistic scenarios and outlines a series of meetings between the VA and victim. The exercise should allow for a safe place for new student SARCs/VAs to practice communicating with victims while not re-victimizing them. The role-play should be expanded to provide students the opportunity to practice new skills and knowledge and receive instructor feedback to ensure they can communicate and act in the victim’s best interest. Providing class time for each student to role-play the VA role with instructor critique of their performance allows time for the student to experience the pressure and make mistakes in a classroom setting in place of their first response to a sexual assault. The course could have experienced SARCs available to observe and guide each pair of students during the role-play sessions to provide a level of support and guidance. The instructor could also set aside time for students to perform the role-play in front of the class, allowing peer and instructor feedback to contribute to group learning. With this solution, the instructor could take the role of the victim during role-play, engaging students and acting in a way they have seen victims respond based on their experience to provide a realistic learning environment.
2. **Involve students in practical exercises while reducing lecture.** The NGB SARC/VA course touches on many topics without allowing students the time needed to process the information, retain it, and apply it. Implementing the principles of adult learning theory, students should be given the opportunity to apply concepts and new information. These types of activities allow students to apply knowledge, ask questions, understand the information in the proper context, and discuss with peers and instructors to deepen their knowledge. Examples of activities to reduce lecture and engage students include the following:

- a. **Cover SARC/VA responsibilities using a practical exercise.** Instead of listing SARC/VA responsibilities on a slide, utilize the role-play case studies that begin with the first contact a victim makes and takes the SARC/VA through to disposition and reintegration, demonstrating SARC/VA responsibilities along the way. Discussions could focus on the actions the SARC/VA would take at each step in the process and instructors can share best practices in the context of the scenario. The instructor could also include ‘what if’ questions to allow students the chance to apply their previous knowledge or to begin to address a new learning objective about the roles and responsibilities of the SARC/VA role. Then a summary of the case could be provided for future reference.
 - b. **Add a practical exercise on SAPR program implementation.** One of the primary areas of responsibility for a SARC is facilitate and publicize the SAPR program. Although requirements for a SAPR program are discussed extensively, a practical exercise allowing the instructor to gauge comprehension in this area and providing time for students to prepare an action plan to implement elements of their responsibilities would optimize the course.
 - c. **Create structured questions for discussions.** The instructor could use each video as an opportunity to facilitate a deeper discussion and help the SARCs/VAs to understand their role and potential impact in each scenario. The ‘Boots on the Ground’ video includes a short discussion, but much more could be brought out in the discussion about victim advocacy and reporting by pausing the video and asking how each SARC/VA would handle each of the situations in the video. Many discussions turn into specific problem solving sessions, which while useful, do not allow time for students to practice skills and knowledge they gain. To improve discussions, instructors could create a set of standard open-ended questions with model responses to guide discussions throughout the course.
3. **Focus training on describing the relevancy of the topic to the SARC/VA role.**
- a. **Provide an outline for guest instructors to ensure their presentations relate to the SARC/VA role.** Guest instructor presentations should focus on the relationships between the SARC/VA and their respective office or role in the SAPR program. Many of the guest instructors speak well to their content, but their presentations focus more on office responsibilities, programs, and policies. The DoD SAPRO team recommends providing a content outline or suggested talking points for each guest speaker to ensure each guest instructor presentation covers topics and objectives from the perspective of the SARC/VA role. These suggested topics should relate directly to the objectives and responsibilities of the SARC/VA role, and focus on how the SARC/VA interacts with the respective office or organization providing the briefing, especially when the organization might not have responsibility to the victim.
 - b. **Provide information on drug-facilitated sexual assault relevant to the SARC/VA role.** The presentation on drug-facilitated sexual assault could be more beneficial for SARCs/VAs if the instructor discusses the importance of understanding the relationship between drug use and sexual assault and provides information on the current types and street names of drugs offenders use. The current presentation provides too much detail on the chemical composition of drugs used in drug-facilitated sexual assault. Following the presentation, a Jeopardy game asks questions that require a SARCs/VAs to recall details about the drugs, but it is clearly stated that being an expert on drugs is not part of their role.
 - c. **Include review of the sexual assault forensic evidence (SAFE) kit.** Another area for improvement includes the SANE nurse presentation. While her detailed description of the physical exam was useful to enable SARCs/VAs to understand what a victim could expect

during an examination, this section could provide a stronger focus on how the SARC/VA can support and advocate for the victim through all healthcare services requested. When the presentation is provided by a civilian SANE, it would be useful for the instructor to follow the presentation with detail of DD Form 2911 and discuss the storage requirements as part of the case file.

4. **Improve course training materials.**

- a. **Implement the training as designed.** Upon review of the presentation and reference materials provided on the DVD, the DoD SAPRO team found that while many topics are included in the materials, some were glossed over during the presentation of the observed course. Creation of an instructor guide or training support package would ensure consistent delivery of the course across all deliveries to meet the needs of new NGB SARCs/VAs.
- b. **Reduce the use of lecture and presentation slides.** The course relies heavily on the use of PowerPoint slides, which should be reduced. Information presented to students using lecture and slides is less likely to be retained than information discussed or practiced during exercises because students need to take an active role in the learning process to commit the information to long-term memory. Many of the slides are also very text-heavy and could be revised so text is shorter and more graphics that are informational are presented. The instructor may also want to consider providing copies of slides for students to take personal notes during the course to assist them in recalling information and providing the opportunity to add personal thoughts related to new topics. While the presentation materials are provided at the end of the week, they will be more useful if students have them on their desks during the class with included space for note taking.
- c. **Provide context for electronic support materials.** The DVD of materials provided to students at the end of the week is an excellent resource, but does not contain all files presented during the week (e.g. LOD Module Briefing, SARC Policy Briefing, and homework assignment) and could be better organized to help students easily locate information. For example, it would be helpful for the files to reference the session title and instructor's name to match the provided agenda. The DVD also includes extra files that were not discussed during the training so it is unclear how they are related or how they will be useful to students as they continue in their SARC/VA role.
- d. **Improve the printed handbook.** The printed handbook provided to students is not used much in the course and could be leveraged more. By referencing the particular policies, forms and processes in the handbook during exercises and lecture, students can become familiar with the documents and gain experience accessing them when the need arises. The handbook would also be more useful for students to use and reference in the future if the book employed page numbers and section separators to help students find information quickly.

Training Content

1. **Expand upon and add practical exercises to address missing topics.**

- a. **Include a practical exercise to demonstrate ethical behavior.** As part of the D-SAACP certification, SARCs sign the SARC/SAPR VA Code of Professional Ethics. The course addresses biases during the 'Values Clarification' activity, but could benefit from expansion of the activity to provide students the opportunity to practice removing their personal beliefs and to discuss some challenges they may face separating their personal biases from their cases. After the activity, students could be asked to share how they

associated with each presentation, activity, and topic to ensure the proper emphasis is placed on the topics most relevant to a new SARC/VA.

- c. **Review the forthcoming DoDI 6495.02, DoD Standards for Victim Assistance Services, and D-SAACP SARC/VA competency framework to ensure all requirements for SARC/VA training are addressed.** Many specific requirements for SARCs and VAs training are included in the new version of the DoDI currently in revision. Identified gaps include training on DSAID, details of the differentiated roles and responsibilities of the SARC and the VA, instruction for SARCs on screening prospective VAs, demonstration of communication skills with victims, and general victim care. The DoD SAPRO team recommends performing a detailed review of all requirements, core competencies, skills, and knowledge necessary for the SARC and/or VA role, and ensure the NGB course meets all listed requirements and adequately prepares students for each role when the new DoDI is signed.
 - d. **Add instruction for SARCs to conduct required SAPR training.** The need for SARCs 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, the requirement for SARCs to oversee SAPR training should be discussed in more detail and training materials or information on where to access training materials should be provided during the course. Ideally, students should be provided a short train-the-trainer session to gain facilitation skills and then practice delivering a portion of the training in front of the instructor or peers for critique. SARCs should also be provided with strategies for planning how to conduct required SAPR training throughout the command.
 - e. **Add instruction to enable VAs to practice specific victim advocacy skills.** VAs need strong victim advocacy skills including communication, interpersonal, and assessment skills. By expanding the role-play exercise (described in item 1 in the Training Practices and Methods Recommendations above), new VAs will have the opportunity to practice advocacy skills with feedback provided by student SARCs and instructors. This role-play could also provide an opportunity to act out the communication lines, roles, and limitations in the relationship between the VA, SARC, and commander.
4. **Address factual errors.** Some factual errors identified during the observation include the following:
- a. During Maj. Winston's presentation on Day 2, she stated that DoD civilians and/or contractors outside the continental United States could file a restricted report. This is a factual error; they can only file an unrestricted report.
 - b. Ms. Mary Hale stated that the punishment for rape in the military is capital punishment. The UCMJ states the maximum sentence is life in prison. As of 20 December 2012, an enlisted sailor was sentenced to life in prison after being convicted of a sexual assault he committed on a Navy ship.
 - c. There was confusion throughout the week on conflicting information with regard to duty status and if a victim is covered under Title 32, Title 10 or SAD status. If a Service member is drilling over the weekend in a Title 32 status and the individual is sexually assaulted, conflicting answers were provided in response to the type of support/services they could receive.