

ENCLOSURE (1): SHARP/SAPR TRAINING ANALYSIS/RECOMMENDATIONS
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Background

The DOD has recently adopted the “Bystander Intervention Approach” for its SHARP/SAPR training programs. Bystander intervention aims to change the cultural attitudes and perspectives on sexual violence by focusing on preventative courses of action solely through a third party witness’ lens. It seeks to empower individuals to “intervene” when they witness situations that may or may not lead to sexual harassment or sexual assault.

Positives

- Bystander intervention engages the entire unit/community in order to change cultural attitudes about sexual violence.
- Training materials are interactive and allow trainees to explore different outcomes based on a given set of options, which are the possible courses of action one can take in each scenario.
- The scenarios/hypotheticals are based on frequent and familiar situations that often occur at the small unit level, where lower ranking enlisted personnel may confront these situations but feel less empowered to take action against them.

Critiques

- The current bystander intervention approach does not include any meaningful instruction on offender statistics or consent-based training. The focus on third parties only neglects critical discussions about the consequences of an offender’s behavior on victims and unit readiness. Any references in the current training are surface-level and collateral.
- Training videos exclusively portray female victims. Specifically, in the Army’s SHARP training there was one recurring female character that portrayed the victim in almost all of the scenarios/hypotheticals. The only scenario/hypothetical that depicted a male “victim” was a relatively benign skit that demonstrated an inappropriate public conversation between two female NCOs who were sexually objectifying a faceless male soldier from a distance.
- Even though the Pentagon reported earlier this year that 53% of unwanted sexual contact involved attacks on men, mostly by other men,¹ all references to sexual assault or sexual harassment in the training were in the context of opposite-sex or opposite-gender interactions. There were no depictions of same-sex or same-gender sexual harassment or assault.
- Conversations with male victims indicate that in many cases, male on male assaults occur in conjunction with hazing or other types of physically assaultive behavior. Training needs to point this out and help trainees and leaders recognize when such inappropriate conduct crosses the line and becomes sexual assault.

¹ James Dao, *In Debate Over Military Sexual Assault, Men Are Overlooked Victims*, The New York Times (June 23, 2013), http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/24/us/in-debate-over-military-sexual-assault-men-are-overlooked-victims.html?_r=0

Possible Solutions

As is characteristic of the current SHARP/SAPR training, a program that emphasizes only female victims coupled with a focus only on bystander intervention is susceptible to criticism that it further cultivates a paternalistic working environment, which is counterproductive to military readiness and women's progress in the armed forces. Therefore, there should be additions and changes made to the training.

Bystander intervention itself is not paternalistic. It is paternalistic to the extent that women are largely portrayed as the "victims" in the Program's training, or unempowered weaker individuals in need of intervention (or "saving") on their behalf.

Instead, the training should include a more diverse range of scenarios/hypotheticals. The DOD is aiming to change cultural attitudes of sexual violence through training. Thus, because the reality is that there are more reported cases of unwanted sexual contact against men,² male victimization should not be minimized. Rather, the training should add scenarios that aim to empower witnesses and parties to take preventative actions no matter what the victim's sex or gender is.

Bystander intervention is insufficient to the extent that training service members to intervene in potentially dangerous situations in order to ensure the safety of fellow service members is no different from how the military already trains its service members to react or behave. Bystander intervention approach must be supplemented by other training, including instruction on offender statistics and consent training.

- ✓ Although no specific universal profile for offenders exist, instruction on offender statistics help to disrupt myths about who is and who is NOT more prone, or alternatively, less likely, to commit acts of sexual violence or sexual harassment. The purpose is to demonstrate that every individual should feel an obligation to reflect on their own actions and be responsible for the consequences of their own behaviors, whether others perceive them to be consequential or not.
- ✓ In that regard, the training should also include consent-based training to provide bright line rules that guide individuals in their self-reflection and analysis on their own behavior.
- ✓ Consent-based training is a basic foundation in preventing and ending sexual violence and abuse of power in situations that far exceed sexual violence and sexual harassment.
 - ◆ According to a study in the *Journal of Family Violence*, Women veterans are experiencing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) at alarming rates.³
 - ◆ In fact, the National Center for PTSD website reports that Women Veterans and active duty military personnel are even more likely than non-Veterans to have experienced IPV.⁴ Among women Veterans, 39% report having experienced IPV at some point in their lives. In active duty women, 30-44%

² *Id.*

³ Katherine M. Iverson, Stephanie Y. Wells, Shannon Wiltsey-Stirman, Rachel Vaughn, Megan R. Gerber, *VHA Primary Care Providers' Perspectives on Screening Female Veterans for Intimate Partner Violence: A Preliminary Assessment*, Vol. 28, Issue 8, *Journal of Family Violence* pp. 823-831 (2013).

⁴ <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/domestic-violence.asp>.

report having experienced IPV during their lifetimes.⁵

- ◆ Estimates of IPV committed by Veterans and active duty servicemen range between 13.5% and 58% and these rates have been found to be up to three times higher than seen among civilians.⁶
- ◆ Consent-based training is an integral part of numerous anti-violence against women campaigns.⁷

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *See, e.g.*, The Stop Violence Against Women Project, a project of The Advocates for Human Rights, which is an international organization that provides a forum for information, advocacy and change in the promotion of women's human rights around the world, available at <http://www.stopvaw.org/consent>.