IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Trauma is an important issue for the increasing number of women who make up the Armed Services and who deploy with their male counterparts. Women are now 20 percent of new recruits, 14 percent of the military as a whole, and 18 percent of the National Guard and Reserve. While women represent only 8 percent of veterans, their risk factors are rising disproportionately to their numbers http://www.dol.gov/wb/trauma/. Additional statistics on women in the military, information about the impact of trauma, and sources for further information can be found in the first Federal Partners Report on Women and Trauma http://nicic.gov/Library/025082.

How a Trauma-Informed Approach Can Make a Difference

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) is responsible for the oversight of Department of Defense (DOD) sexual assault policy. Its mission is to enable military readiness by establishing a culture free of sexual assault. DOD has implemented a comprehensive policy to ensure the safety, dignity and well being of all members of the Armed Force, and DOD leaders - both Military and civilian – are committed to maintaining a workplace environment that reinforces a culture of sexual assault prevention, response and accountability. SAPRO recognizes that trauma survivors are vulnerable and that service delivery approaches can inadvertently re-trigger trauma or exacerbate its consequences. SAPRO is working to make all services and programs trauma-informed so that they can be more culturally competent, gender-neutral and recovery-oriented and to avoid re-traumatization.
Major Accomplishments 2010-2013

The DoD Safe Helpline was launched to provide crisis support for victims of sexual assault. Administered by the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, the Helpline is available 24/7 worldwide. Users can “click, call or text” for anonymous and confidential support, access help via tablet computers and smart phones, and connect with professionals via phone or anonymous online chat.

SAPRO collaborated with the military service departments to establish an expedited process for individuals reporting sexual assault and requesting a change in duty station or assignment. Following a credible report of sexual assault, a presumption is established in favor of transferring the service member who initiated the request, or the service member can request that the offender be transferred.

SAPRO and the military services have standardized sexual assault victim advocacy across the Department, professionalized the roles of Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates, and establish certification requirements.

Through an initiative with the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, SAPRO trained Equal Opportunity (EO) Advisors on sexual assault definitions and reporting and response mechanisms. Basic education about SAPRO is now being integrated into ongoing EO courses.

New Directions and Collaborations

SAPRO continues its collaborative training partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). By working with civilian rape crisis centers, the Department helps ensure that Service members receive assistance that considers their military-specific needs, even when they seek assistance off base. In addition, a regional training program for civilians was conducted by the SAPRO Program representatives and civilians in regions with high populations of Service members.

Additional Resources

Update contact: Maritza.m.saylewalker.civ@mail.mil

DOD SAPRO website http://www.sapr.mil/

To access the Safe Helpline go to https://safehelpline.org/

For information on Transitioning Service members: https://safehelpline.org/tsm-overview.cfm