

BUILDING COHESIVE TEAMS THROUGH

CHARACTER TRUST RESILIENCE

Protecting Our People Protects Our Mission



SAAPM
Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month

What is a Culture of Support?

Developing a culture that supports survivors of sexual assault starts at the top with our leaders. Support can come in the form of tools and resources, but it also comes in what is said and how one behaves. When leaders, teammates, and Families come together to form a Culture of Support, survivors feel safe reporting sexual assault and can begin the road to recovery.

Some of the barriers a leader may face when providing support include:

Implicit Bias – Implicit bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. One example, a sexual assault survivor files a report, but you have a preconceived idea of who a victim is or how they should look so you may not believe them or take their report seriously.

Misreading behavioral changes – Someone who experiences a sexual assault may exhibit a change in their demeanor and actions, which can be misunderstood. Instead of noticing the change and seeking to understand what caused the change, the Soldier may be reprimanded or face disciplinary action.

Fear – According to Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, fear is an unspoken emotion that becomes a barrier for some leaders to take action. Fear can stem from concerns about the incident reflecting poorly on their leadership abilities and affecting their career.

How Leaders Can Help Build a Culture of Support

Be Engaged: Every Soldier has a teammate, a Family, and a leader in their life. Stay engaged with the individual Soldier, as well as the people in their “golden triangle,” who can let you know if a Soldier is struggling. Leaders who are in tune with their team’s needs can help them succeed.

Be Aware: Realize that your preconceived notion of what a “victim” looks like or how they “should” act may lead you to not believe a survivor. Be aware of this bias and take all sexual assault reports seriously. Be willing to participate in continuous training so you are ready to respond and appropriately support sexual assault survivors.

Be Supportive: Sexual assault survivors may exhibit negative behavior changes after an assault. Instead of initiating disciplinary action, ensure they receive appropriate behavioral health support to cope with the trauma. This helps demonstrate to Soldiers that “People First” is leaders’ number one priority.

“Leaders, from team leader to Command Sergeant Major, bear the responsibility to care for and protect our Soldiers and Families...Responsibility without accountability corrodes the trust necessary to build cohesive teams...You have the power to influence the culture of your unit, your squad and your Soldiers. Now is the time to put people first.”

- Sergeant Major of the Army Michael Grinston



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DoD

Safe Helpline

Sexual Assault Support for the DoD Community

DoD Safe Helpline: 877-995-5247