Department of Defense

Prevention Plan of Action
2019-2023

The Department's renewed strategic approach to prevent sexual assault

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
for Personnel and Readiness

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sexual assault continues to impact a significant portion of the U.S. Armed Forces. Sexual assault disrupts mission readiness, impedes force lethality, taxes scarce resources, and takes a human toll. The Department has experienced some periods of progress in decreasing the occurrence of sexual assault. However, future reductions demand additional significant steps to institutionalize the conditions that support lasting progress, align efforts to proven approaches, and drive the kind of behavioral and cultural changes that will achieve the Department's vision of a military free from sexual assault.

The process of developing and implementing effective sexual assault prevention is intuitive but complex. It requires a series of data-driven actions that leverage research based evidence and leadership experience. Past Department efforts have focused on specific aspects of sexual assault prevention in order to build towards a comprehensive approach.

This Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA) builds on past work and advances prevention by establishing the expectations for a comprehensive prevention process and prevention system, as well as specific actions the Department, Services, and National Guard Bureau (NGB) will take to realize effective prevention in every military community. This PPoA outlines the prevention process and prevention system elements that will serve as the enduring framework for sexual assault prevention and related oversight. Through the PPoA, the Department asserts that sexual assault can be measurably and systematically reduced within an organization and commits to the actions necessary to achieve that end state.

1. Introduction

On December 1, 2016, the Secretary of Defense approved the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategic Plan, 2017-2021. The plan identified a forthcoming strategic document, the PPoA, to guide Department prevention efforts within the military environment. The PPoA draws from research and practices from military and civilian communities to identify a common way forward for defining, developing, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive prevention approaches to stop sexual assault before it occurs.

2. Current State of Sexual Assault Prevention in the Department of Defense

From 2006 to 2016, the Department's surveys of the military population estimated that past year prevalence rates of sexual assault against active duty personnel declined by half for women and by two-thirds for men. The reduction in sexual assaults over that decade may have resulted from numerous factors, including Service member buy in, senior leader attention, improved law enforcement and crime investigation, and innovative programming by the Military Services and NGB. Further, these decreases may have been a reflection of the overall downward trend in violent victimization throughout the United States during that same period.[1]

Sexual assault is preventable, yet it continues to affect a significant portion of the U.S. Armed Forces. Historically, activities aimed at preventing sexual assault have primarily centered on raising awareness about the crime. These approaches have likely contributed to increases in victim reporting and use of support services, but civilian sector research suggests awareness programming does not translate into the kinds of long-term behavior changes required to prevent sexual assault at an organizational level. To accomplish demonstrable, measurable, and sustained reductions in sexual assault throughout the military, the Department will amplify efforts to align activities at all levels with the current state of sexual assault prevention science. Further, the Department will infuse sexual assault prevention policy and oversight assessments with scientific standards for sustaining organization-level impact.

3. Current State of Sexual Assault Prevention Science

Sexual assault prevention science has evolved over the past decade. Growing evidence shows that sexual assault can be prevented within communities and organizations. There is also greater clarity on the methods required to achieve reductions in sexual assault. While sexual assault prevention is complex, the steps required to diminish prevalence and sustain progress are not dissimilar from common planning processes used routinely throughout the U.S. Armed Forces.[2] First, sexual assault prevention requires a holistic, comprehensive approach executed with unity of effort toward the desired end state. Building this approach requires understanding the current environment, determining the scope of the local problem, and assessing the organizational factors that drive prevention. Second, a comprehensive approach is comprised

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[1] Morgan, Rachel E and Jennifer L. Truman. "Criminal Victimization, 2017." *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018. Retrieved 13 February 2019 from https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv17.pdf.
[2] Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC, 2017), https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp5_0_20171606.pdf

of integrated, research based prevention activities, which achieve unity of effort only when implemented with fidelity in a conducive, supportive environment. Third, prevention activities require the systematic execution of data driven tactics to achieve the desired outcomes. Finally, preventing sexual assault requires evaluating change indicators over time, assessing organizational factors to inform adjustments to the prevention approach, and measuring the effectiveness of specific prevention activities.[3]

Achieving Department-wide decreases in sexual assault involves executing the prevention process in an optimized prevention system. Organizational factors that constitute the system elements include **human resources, such as equipped and empowered leadership and prevention workforce; infrastructure, such as prevention-specific policy, resources, and data systems; and, collaborative relationships within and across organizations.**[4] In an optimized prevention system, human resources attain and sustain prevention-specific knowledge and skills, productive and collaborative relationships form and strengthen, and infrastructure facilitates effective planning, execution, evaluation, and quality improvement. Too often prevention activities fail to achieve impact because they are implemented without sufficient development of these system elements. (See Figure 1)
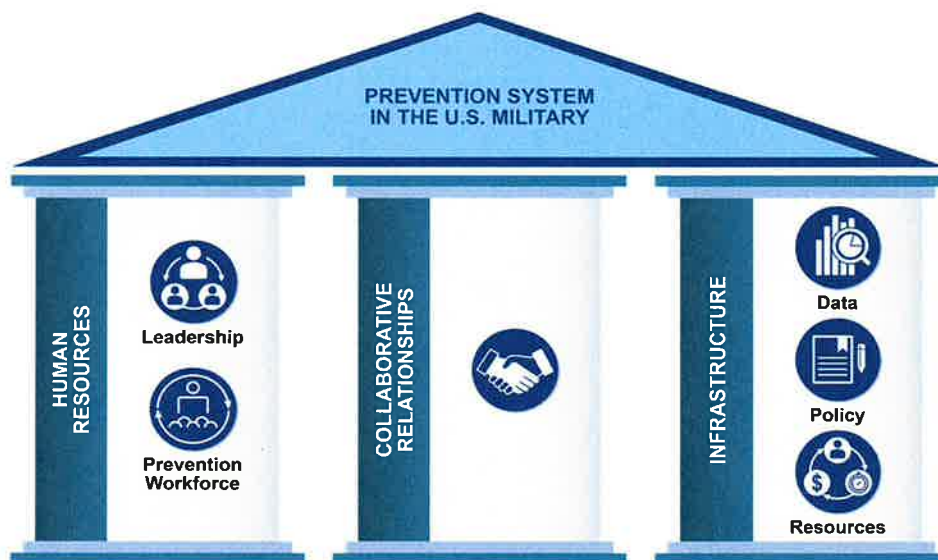

Figure 1
Sexual Assault Prevention System

The prevention process is a multi-step data-driven process. The first step in the sexual assault prevention process involves **understanding the nature and magnitude of a problem within an organization**. This is typically achieved through surveys that systematically and periodically

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[3] Basile, Kathleen, Sarah DeGue, Kathryn Jones, Kimberly Freire, Jenny Dills, Sharon Smith, and Jerris Raiford. 2016. "Stop SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence." National Center for Injury Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA
[4] Pan American Health Organization. 2014. "Plan of Action for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the Americas, 2013-2019." World Health Organization, Washington, DC.

assess the prevalence (number of people impacted) and incidence (frequency of occurrence) of a problem over time. The Department has a number of surveys that assess the self-reported experiences of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and related behaviors.

Subsequent to defining the magnitude of the problem through self-report surveys, research identifies **factors that contribute to sexual assault and its prevention**. Generally speaking, contributing factors are either risk or protective factors. Risk factors increase the likelihood that sexual assault will occur. Protective factors decrease the likelihood that sexual assault will occur, or buffer someone with risk factors from becoming a victim or perpetrator of sexual assault. Risk and protective factors have been identified in a variety of contexts, including individual, interpersonal, and organizational. Given the potential variability of sexual assault prevalence and risk across military settings, each organization must also conduct needs assessments to determine which contributing factors should be prioritized for prevention. The analysis and dissemination of prevalence survey results, research on contributing factors, and local needs assessments provide leaders with the data to guide prevention decision making.

Next, effective prevention involves developing a **comprehensive approach** by applying multiple reinforcing prevention activities (Figure 2) in a coordinated way to address individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors that contribute to sexual assault. This involves pairing activities that foster healthy environments and peer norms with those that build personal and interpersonal skills. For example, although sexual harassment is a risk factor for sexual assault, implementing policies designed to decrease sexual harassment in isolation may not lead to reduced sexual assault. However, pairing policies with programs, and practices, such as bystander programs that build skills to interrupt the chain of events leading to an offense or practices that establish a culture in which sexual assault is not tolerated, will reinforce each prevention activity and may increase progress toward fewer incidents of sexual assault.

> ### Figure 2
> ### Types of Prevention Activities
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> - **Policy:** A course or principle of action of a government or other institution that may be reflected in regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice
> - **Program:** Curriculum or manualized set of activities and information intended for learning and skill development
> - **Practice:** Discrete behavior or action contributing to prevention

Comprehensive approaches must use universal prevention activities that engage all Service members by providing skills for building positive peer environments and promoting protective factors in addition to targeted activities that address unique needs of at-risk subpopulations. Within large organizations, specific subpopulations are at higher risk for experiencing or perpetrating sexual assault. For example, most risk behaviors are prevalent among individuals under the age of 25. Therefore, targeted prevention activities that mitigate the risk among at-risk subpopulations paired with prevention activities aimed at the general population create a robust and oftentimes more efficient comprehensive approach.

Integrating prevention activities into a cohesive, comprehensive approach yields other advantages, such as promoting unity of effort, avoiding duplication, and lessening training fatigue. Given the associations between sexual assault and other problematic behaviors, such as alcohol misuse and sexual harassment, a comprehensive approach for sexual assault

prevention requires the inclusion of activities that effectively mitigate these and other contributing factors.

The specific prevention activities that address individual, interpersonal, and organizational risk and protective factors must be compatible with each other, such that messaging or skills are mutually reinforcing rather than eroding. Selecting multiple activities that employ a similar approach, such as bystander intervention, are not sufficient to ensure compatibility since different bystander programs may have conflicting branding and messaging.

Prevention activities that comprise a comprehensive approach should be selected based on research evidence that they have shown promise in evaluations to decrease sexual assault for a specific population or affected one or more contributing factors, such as risky sexual behavior and non-sexual interpersonal violence, in settings similar to those being considered for the activity and that positive effects were sustained over time.

Although implementation of a proven prevention activity is a significant undertaking and critical step to decrease prevalence, the **quality of implementation** is equally important.[5] The manner and context in which prevention activities are delivered have a direct effect on the potential success of a comprehensive approach. Prevention activities must be implemented with fidelity in supportive climates. Fidelity refers to the degree to which an activity is implemented competently and according to its original design. For example, shortening a prevention program from the duration that was evaluated or delivering it with unprepared facilitators can alter its efficacy. Hallmarks for a supportive climate include leadership buy-in, organizational motivation to implement an activity, and/or staff with specific skills to implement the activity. Attempting to implement prevention activities in an unsupportive climate decreases their potential impact.

Once a comprehensive approach is implemented in a supportive climate, it must be **continuously evaluated** to determine if its component activities are changing the factors they were designed to address. For example, evaluation identifies if and to what extent an activity actually had an impact on the risk factors associated with sexual assault. Likewise, evaluation can determine if an activity increased protective factors within a given environment, making sexual assault less likely. Ongoing evaluation is critical both for continuous quality improvement, as well as to determine which activities should be sustained and which should be discontinued.

The prevention system is the backdrop against which prevention planning, implementation, and evaluation takes place, such that deficits or gaps in the system degrade the execution of prevention activities. System elements, such as human resources and collaborative relationships, can be dynamic. Rapid changes in these areas can impact an organization's prevention activities. Attending to the system elements in addition to the prevention process and activities enables military organizations to fully understand, anticipate, and mitigate the effect of system elements on prevention activities. For example, implementing a prevention training that requires facilitators to be trained to implement the training requires a prevention workforce. In the absence of a prevention workforce, other personnel often are dual-hatted to implement the training, which can overtax a military organization leading to decreases in leader buy-in. Lack of buy-in related to overtaxing the organization may be perceived by subordinate

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[5] Wandersman, Abraham, Kassandra Alia, Brittany S. Cook, Lewis L. Hsu, and Rohit Ramaswamy. "Evidence-based Interventions are Necessary but Not Sufficient for Achieving Outcomes in Each Setting in a Complex World: Empowerment Evaluation, Getting to Outcomes, and Demonstrating Accountability." *American Journal of Evaluation* 37, no. 4 (2016): 544-561.

leaders as lack of buy-in to the training. Even if the prevention training had the potential to reduce sexual assault incidence, not attending to the human resources necessary to implement the training will decrease effectiveness. Therefore, there is a symbiotic association between the system elements and prevention process. Both must be developed and promoted.
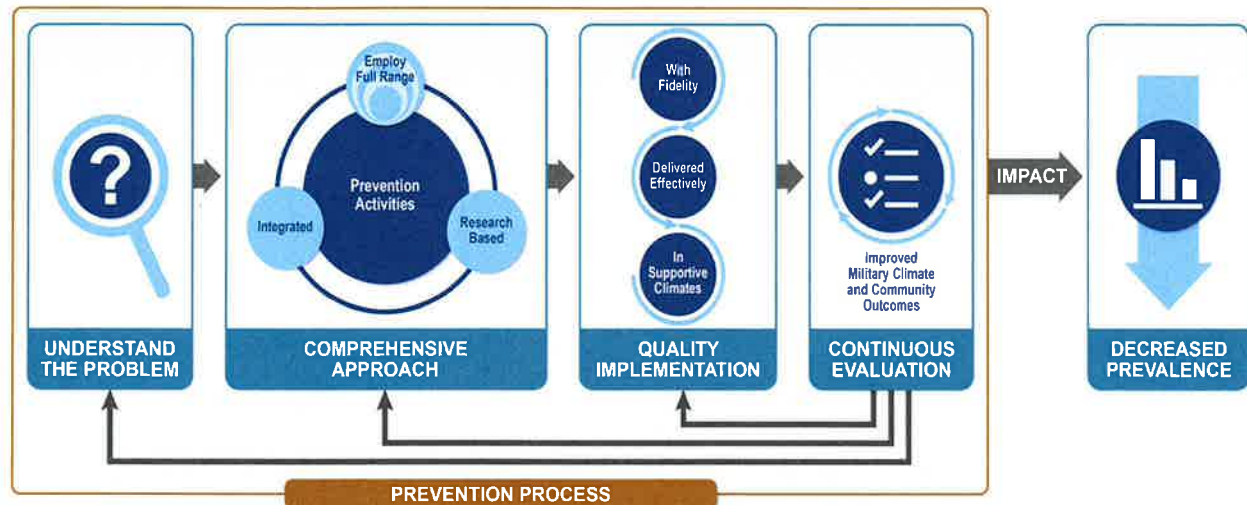

Figure 3
Sexual Assault Prevention Process

To summarize, effective prevention involves execution of a prevention process (see Figure 3) facilitated by a prevention system (Figure 1). The prevention system enables the planning and execution of sexual assault prevention and includes: Human Resources (Prevention Workforce and Leadership), Collaborative Relationships, and Infrastructure (Data, Resources, and Policy). Specific steps in the prevention process include understanding the problem and contributing factors, developing a comprehensive approach that targets contributing factors and engages service members in solutions, implementing the comprehensive approach with fidelity in supportive climates, and evaluating the comprehensive approach. The combination of all of these elements are necessary to decrease sexual assault prevalence and sustain reductions over time.

4. Goals for Sexual Assault Prevention in the Department of Defense

Establishing an organization that is optimized to support and sustain the development, implementation, and evaluation of a comprehensive sexual assault prevention approach is a long-term undertaking. As such, the Department has identified and prioritized actions to take related to each system element and step in the prevention process. The PPoA sexual assault prevention goals and objectives are organized by these elements and steps understanding that the objectives are inter-related and interdependent. Short (1-2 year), intermediate (3-4 year), and long term (5+ year) objectives outline specific steps that the Department, Services, and/or NGB will take to advance sexual assault prevention. Following each objective, the office of primary responsibility (OPR) is listed.

Prevention Plan of Action

4.1. Prevention System – Human Resources: Leadership

Military commanders and leaders at all levels are responsible for creating and fostering a climate predicated on mutual respect and trust in an environment where sexual assault is not tolerated. Leaders leverage their knowledge, experience, judgment, intuition, responsibility, and authority to make informed decisions that influence the command climate, based on their individual understanding of the environment and prevention system. Leaders must have a full understanding of the prevention process to support the development, implementation, and assessment of a comprehensive approach.

Military commanders and leaders must work closely with their prevention workforce to marry their experience with that of sexual assault prevention science. First, leaders at all levels are responsible for infusing their leadership experience about what works in operational environments with research based evidence on what works in sexual assault prevention. Leadership accountability toward this end extends beyond implementation, but also in fostering the supportive climate from which these approaches can thrive. Second, leaders must proactively communicate their support for the utilization of what works. The lack of visible leadership support undermines the efficacy of proven approaches and enables the status quo.[6] Finally, subordinate leaders and the prevention workforce must be held appropriately accountable for adhering to the prevention process and fostering supportive climates for implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive approach. In effect, direct leader engagement in these areas accelerates the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach, and is necessary to generate measureable and sustained decreases in sexual assault incidents.

Objectives:
4.1.1. Develop tools to help leaders understand and communicate effectively on the prevention process and prevention system, and tools to inform their decision making on developing, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive approaches. (Short; OPR: DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), Services/NGB)
4.1.2. Develop an evaluation framework to enable leadership to hold subordinate leadership and the prevention workforce accountable for their effective application of the prevention process and prevention system. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO)
4.1.3. Equip leadership with tools to identify, hire, and train prevention professionals and oversee effective prevention activities. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)

4.2. Prevention System – Human Resources: Prevention Workforce

Creating an organization that implements effective sexual assault prevention requires a trained, equipped, and resourced prevention workforce. The prevention workforce should also have expertise in prevention science commensurate with their role, function, echelon, and organization. For example, individuals in strategic and policy roles must be able to synthesize data and research and translate the findings into policy and guidance. Individuals in organizations supporting or overseeing individuals who implement prevention activities must be able to apply the strategic guidance to their sphere of influence. They must also provide tools

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[6] Gottfredson, D. C., Cook, T. D., Gardner, F. E., Gorman-Smith, D., Howe, G. W., Sandler, I. N., & Zafft, K. M. (2015). Standards of Evidence for Efficacy, Effectiveness, and Scale-up Research in Prevention Science: Next Generation. Prevention science: the official journal of the Society for Prevention Research, 16(7), 893-926.
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4579256/

and technical assistance to prevention professionals at the tactical level to facilitate the execution of the strategic guidance. Individuals at the tactical level who implement prevention activities require collaboration and facilitation skills as well as the ability to apply the strategic guidance, tools, and technical assistance to their unique organization. In addition to these specific skills, the prevention workforce at each level must request feedback from and provide feedback to the other levels to assess programmatic and professional effectiveness. Ongoing, bidirectional feedback ensures that tools, training, and technical assistance are tailored to evolving needs of diverse organizations and their prevention workforce.

The successful implementation of effective prevention activities relies on understanding and applying prevention research and integrating that research with leadership experience. To ensure that effective, comprehensive approaches are implemented at all levels, the Department must define and build the competencies of its workforce to use sound research and contextualize the research with leaders' expertise. Training curricula for the prevention workforce must build relevant skills to identify and tailor prevention approaches to sub-populations, such as young Service members, within the military.[7]

Distinguishing Prevention and Response Skill Sets in Dual-Hatted Professionals

Initial efforts in sexual assault prevention occurred within frameworks designed for response. Thus, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) personnel have traditionally prioritized advocacy and response, as reinforced by victim reporting and heightening sexual assault awareness throughout the Services. Current policy requirements and SAPR personnel training emphasize response proficiency, providing little time to impart prevention-oriented knowledge and skills. As a result, historical efforts have produced and reinforced an exceptionally sound response system at the expense of a prevention mission. To effectively equip prevention professionals to execute a comprehensive prevention approach, it is necessary to recognize differences in the competencies, systems, policies, and research necessary for developing and implementing prevention versus those that are necessary for response.

Objectives:
4.2.1. Develop curriculum that builds core competencies for prevention professionals, pilot the curriculum, and make training available to establish a core group of equipped sexual assault prevention professionals across the Department. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO)
4.2.2. Identify and select prevention professionals who will constitute the prevention workforce and facilitate their training and credentialing. (Short, OPR: Services/NGB)
4.2.3. Establish a basic credential, including the required prevention-specific knowledge and skills for a sexual assault prevention workforce, and facilitate its adoption across the Department's prevention workforce. (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO)
4.2.4. Incorporate prevention professional development requirements into policies to ensure consistent training and competence of prevention professionals. (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)
4.2.5. Conduct and support regular needs assessments to assess and enhance professional development of prevention professionals; develop and implement methods to address deficits in competencies when identified. (Intermediate; OPR: Services/NGB)

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[7]The term "proven prevention activity" refers to activities that have evidence of targeted behavior change or change to one or more contributing factors, for a given population, resulting from that activity.

4.2.6. Develop tiered credential (and supporting training) to match the varying competency requirements of prevention professionals, such as those working in complex military operational environments (e.g., Joint Bases, high ops tempo). (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO)

4.2.7. Establish partnerships with academia and public health programs to develop an apprenticeship program for prevention professionals to train in military settings. (Long; OPR: DoD SAPRO)

4.3. Prevention System – Collaborative Relationships

Although destructive behaviors have some unique contributing factors, many factors are shared (e.g., substance abuse, history of violent victimization, lack of nonviolent problem solving skills). These shared contributing factors can serve as the basis for collaborative relationships. Collaborative relationships between the sexual assault prevention workforce and stakeholders from other similarly invested organizations allows for greater integration of efforts. Integrated prevention activities reinforce shared solutions and create opportunities for common prevention messaging and skill development. Creating complementary programming and initiatives, while maintaining the distinct elements unique to each issue, can support an overall reduction in problem behaviors. Collaborative relationships require stakeholder buy-in on collective goals, a willingness to share mutually-beneficial and effective approaches, and potentially sharing resources. For example, if shared language and framing of a bystander approach are integrated into training and event programming from several issue areas, multiple doses of key messages are delivered without additional training time. Thus, each issue-specific training is reinforcing the training provided for other topic areas.

Objectives:
4.3.1. Build and maintain collaborative relationships with experts and academic institutions to share prevention research and best practices. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)

4.3.2. Develop and execute a plan for increasing collaboration and strengthening integrative approaches support of primary prevention. (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)

4.3.3. Institutionalize prevention collaboration efforts to establish crosscutting and integrated primary prevention policies, programs, and practices that effectively address shared risk and protective factors across multiple problem behaviors and the career-cycle. (Long; OPR: Services/NGB).

4.4. Prevention System – Infrastructure: Data

Actionable data is critical for institutional accountability. Prevalence surveys provide an indication of change within the military population as a whole, but often there is insufficient statistical power for these surveys to serve as measures of effectiveness for specific approaches at the local or Service level. Substantial research exists with respect to employing risk and protective factors to shape short and intermediate evaluation outcomes. Because a comprehensive prevention approach focuses on doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people, the data that are used to drive and evaluate prevention activities must be representative of the behaviors, attitudes, and climate of the entire organization or population, rather than specific to those who experienced sexual assault or those seeking sexual assault support services.

Regular assessments are necessary so that leaders and stakeholders can better understand the "why" and "how" prevalence of sexual assault changes over time. In addition, local needs assessments help each organization understand which contributing factors should be prioritized for prevention. Regular assessments also provide feedback on how effective specific prevention activities are in achieving their short and intermediate outcomes. The Department must develop a dedicated and sustainable program of research to better understand factors that contribute to sexual assault, methods to identify prevention activities that mitigate those factors, and prevention metrics. Specifically, measures of effectiveness and measures of performance for prevention planning and execution in the military environment are needed. Moreover, data must be systematically captured, analyzed, interpreted, and shared, so that it provides timely and accurate information to inform decisions and drive continuous improvement at all levels.

Objectives:
4.4.1. Identify key contributing factors of military sexual assault in specific populations and across populations that inform universal and targeted prevention and can be used to evaluate prevention activities. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO)
4.4.2. Develop a research agenda that facilitates development, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive prevention approaches across the Department. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO)
4.4.3. Review current data collection efforts to identify opportunities for expanding existing data systems/surveys to capture timely data that informs prevention planning, evaluation, and effectiveness at each level (e.g., local). (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)
4.4.4. Establish methods to integrate prevention-related data across disparate data systems that capture various problem behaviors and risk and protective factors to inform prevention planning and evaluation. (Long; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)

4.5. Prevention System – Infrastructure: Resources

The Department must advance and align budgets related to sexual assault to reflect the Department's stance toward increased prevention efforts. Depending on the unique needs and requirements of each Service, resourcing may be required to conduct research on the factors that contribute to sexual assault in unique communities, to adapt and evaluate prevention activities prior to widespread implementation, to equip leaders with tools to oversee comprehensive prevention, to develop and train a prevention workforce, and to fund implementation of local prevention activities. Resourcing prevention activities must be undertaken in a way that does not diminish or degrade sexual assault response capabilities.

Objectives:
4.5.1. Determine prevention resourcing needs and pursue prevention funding, if needed (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)

4.6. Prevention System – Infrastructure: Policy

Establishing and strengthening prevention-related policy supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of a comprehensive approach. Prevention policies not only represent a portion of the prevention infrastructure and define roles, requirements, and responsibilities; but policies are also prevention tools to achieve environmental change. Both types of prevention policies are described here.

Existing sexual assault policies focus primarily on the response system, leaving prevention roles and requirements unarticulated. Prevention policy should identify the roles and responsibilities of a prevention workforce and leadership, as well as establish standards for employing proven prevention activities as part of a comprehensive approach. Training requirements outlined in policy may need to be aligned to proven or promising prevention activities in terms of frequency, audience, delivery, and content. It is also critical to align sexual assault prevention policies to facilitate better collaboration and integration across stakeholders who work together to prevent inter-related problem behaviors, such as sexual harassment, gender discrimination, alcohol misuse, self-harm, and relationship violence. Prevention policies are also powerful tools to establish environments where sexual assault is less likely. Policies that mitigate situational risk factors for sexual assault have the potential for widespread impact within an organization, without adding time in training.

Objectives:
4.6.1. Review and revise, as needed, policies to establish environments where sexual assault is less likely and facilitate the execution and evaluation of proven primary prevention activities at all levels. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)
4.6.2. Further develop assessments to enhance selection of individuals whose character is compatible with military core values and conduct validation studies, in alignment with industry standards, to evaluate assessment effectiveness. (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO; DoD Accessions Policy; DoD Office of People Analytics; and Services/NGB)
4.6.3. Review and enhance, if needed, selection policies to ensure alignment of military recruits/applicants with military core values. (Long; OPR: DoD SAPRO; DoD Accessions Policy; Services/NGB)

4.7. Prevention Process – Comprehensive Approach

Development of a comprehensive approach begins with the identification of key contributing individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors. Key contributing factors then guide selection of prevention activities that have been proven to mitigate the factors in similar settings. Selected activities are then aligned in a cohesive way so that messaging and skills from one approach reinforce and mutually support those of other approaches. Clearinghouses, reviews, and meta-analyses inform sound decision-making, and provide examples of comprehensive approaches and activities used in other communities that can serve as models for developing a comprehensive approach in military settings.

Objectives
4.7.1. In consultation with subject matter experts across issues and organizations, identify rigorously evaluated prevention activities from multiple disciplines and organizations and integrate proven activities into comprehensive approaches for sexual assault prevention across the career-cycle. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)
4.7.2. Develop method to integrate emerging issues (e.g., men's victimization; retaliation prevention) into comprehensive strategy. (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)

4.8. Prevention Process – Quality Implementation

Quality implementation means effectively delivering a comprehensive approach with fidelity in a supportive climate. Fidelity refers to delivering the approach competently as it was originally designed. Effective delivery means engaging the audience and key stakeholders in a way that inspires behavior change and skill development. Process evaluation and research-informed strategic guidance, tools, and technical assistance facilitate quality implementation. These functions performed by a prevention workforce at various places in an organization ultimately support implementation of a comprehensive prevention approach in each military setting.

A comprehensive prevention approach must be implemented in a supportive climate. Characteristics of supportive climates include leader and population perceptions of incentives and disincentives of implementing the approach, the culture of innovation within a community, specific skills of the prevention workforce to implement the approach, and collaborative working relationships among stakeholders.[8] An understanding of the degree to which a climate supports the implementation of a comprehensive prevention approach also enables leaders to anticipate and address barriers to success in advance of implementation.

One major factor influencing climates is the presence of negative perceptions towards sexual assault prevention resulting from a high saturation of prevention messages and activities in many military communities. Negative perceptions include message and training fatigue, low perceived value of sexual assault awareness events and related activities, and past messaging that equated gender with propensity for victimization or perpetration. Implementation of comprehensive approaches must take into account and reverse negative impressions of sexual assault prevention. Identification of what drives negative SAPR program associations will allow the Department to reduce barriers that would impede positive engagement in new proven prevention approaches. In some cases, adhering to what works and addressing negative perceptions may require pausing or stopping longstanding activities. A close examination of policies that dictate annual requirements must be evaluated to determine where requirements may inadvertently drive counterproductive prevention activities.

Objectives:
4.8.1. Develop, as needed, and utilize methods to assess quality implementation to support prevention planning and execution. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)
4.8.2. Develop and execute methods to address negative perceptions and other barriers to engagement in sexual assault prevention activities, as identified by the Services at appropriate echelon. (Intermediate; OPR: Services/NGB)

4.9. Prevention Process – Continuous Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential skill related to prevention planning and execution. Leadership and prevention stakeholders rely on evaluation to determine how and whether prevention resources – money, time, and manpower – are achieving the intended outcomes. Before a prevention activity is widely disseminated, it must be evaluated to ensure that the prevention approach results in decreases in sexual assault or its contributing factors and is

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[8] Scaccia, Jonathan P., Brittany S. Cook, Andrea Lamont, Abraham Wandersman, Jennifer Castellow, Jason Katz, and Rinad S. Beidas. "A Practical Implementation Science Heuristic for Organizational Readiness: R = MC². *Journal of Community Psychology* 43, no. 4 (2015): 484-501.

feasible to be implemented in a military environment. This involves engaging key stakeholders, describing a prevention activity, defining the expected outcomes, gathering data to assess if outcomes were achieved, using data for improvement, and disseminating lessons learned.

Continuous evaluation of a comprehensive approach is a long-term endeavor. Although some indicators of changes in contributing factors can be realized within months of implementing an effective and potent prevention program, detecting such change requires systematic, valid measurement to capture subtle change over time. Evaluation that includes assessment of multiple outcomes is necessary because comprehensive sexual assault prevention often includes activities that address other problem behaviors, such as sexual harassment and alcohol misuse. In addition, implementing prevention approaches might first result in increases in restricted or unrestricted reporting. As such, regular, valid assessment of multiple outcomes provides a clearer picture of intermediate impact.

Institutionalizing evaluation at every level is a cornerstone of prevention. Managing leadership expectations for rapid results is critical in moving the Department's sexual assault prevention activities toward routine evaluation. Instilling evaluation as a normal part of the prevention process requires an assessment of the current state of evaluation and the prevention system elements necessary for evaluation. The Department must take systematic steps to evolve toward more rigorous evaluation for untested prevention activities. This process likely entails prioritizing activities that are ready for evaluation as well as evaluating activities that are already widely disseminated but not yet tested.

Objectives:
4.9.1. Assess current prevention system elements to determine gaps that preclude systematic evaluation at all levels. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)
4.9.2. Develop an evaluation framework to assess the alignment of sexual assault prevention to the prevention process and prevention system at the Military Service Academies. (Short; OPR: DoD SAPRO)
4.9.3. Establish and validate metrics and develop evaluation tools that can be used across communities to evaluate prevention activities. (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)
4.9.4. Address evaluation gaps and develop, implement, and institutionalize an evaluation process by which prevention programs activities are evaluated and results are disseminated to support continuous quality improvement. (Intermediate; OPR: DoD SAPRO, Services/NGB)

5. The Way Forward

Following adoption of PPoA, the Department will work with stakeholders to conduct a self-assessment of the prevention process and prevention system. The self-assessment will inform how the Department and each Service/NGB will address the objectives. Although Department efforts addressed in this document will focus primarily on sexual assault prevention, the Services may define the scope of their prevention activities given that many Services are using an integrated approach that incorporates multiple areas. The level of effort associated with developing, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive approaches across military communities and to optimize the prevention system is expected to be long-term and substantial. The Department is committed to ensuring consistent movement towards aligning sexual assault prevention activities with sexual assault prevention science as outlined in this PPOA.

Appendix A

Glossary

Collaboration: Exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing each other's capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose.

Credential: A process for verifying preparation, additional training, and/or prior work experiences of prevention human resources by the awarding of either a certificate or certification.

Evaluation: The use of systematic methods to collect, analyze and use information to inform implementation of a policy, program, practice, or processes.

Evidence-Based: Effective policies, programs, practices, or processes that are evidence-based are found to be effective based on research evidence, reflecting significant expertise and investment.

Integration: Building on collaboration to not only exchange information, alter activities, share resources, and enhance capacity, but also merge structures for mutual benefit to achieve a common purpose.

Measure of Effectiveness: An indicator used to measure a current system state, with change indicated by comparing multiple observations over time. (JP 5-0)

Practice: Discrete behavior or action contributing to prevention.

Primary Prevention: Approaches that take place before sexual assault has occurred to prevent first time perpetration or victimization (Different from **secondary prevention:** Immediate responses after sexual assault has occurred to deal with the short-term consequences of violence).

Process: Empirically validated procedures that promote effective planning, implementation, and evaluation of prevention activities (Figure 3).

Program: Curriculum or manualized set of activities and information intended for cognitive learning and skill development.

Protective Factors: Factors that make it less likely that people will perpetrate or experience violence or that increase their resilience when they are faced with risk factors.

Risk Factors: Factors that make it more likely that people will experience or perpetrate violence

Sexual Assault: Intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent. As used in this Instruction, the term includes a broad category of sexual offenses consisting of the following specific Uniform Code of Military Justice offenses: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy (forced oral or anal sex), or attempts to commit these offenses.