



Department of the Air Force RESILIENCE

SUPPORTING BOTH OUR AIR AND SPACE FORCES AND FAMILIES



Prevention - #18

Sexual Assault

The Air Force defines sexual assault as intentional unwanted sexual contact. Sexual assault can have psychological, emotional, and physical impacts on victims. Victims may experience a broad range of reactions both immediately after the assault and for months or years later. However, with the right help and support, these impacts can be managed and victims can recover to lead happy and healthy lives.

Signs Wingmen Should Know/Look For

- It is normal to experience feelings of distress after a sexual assault. However, if these feelings become severe, last longer than a few weeks, and interrupt daily activities, the Airman may be at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Wingmen should look for following:
 - Indicators of increased stress, anxiety, or depressed mood.
 - Difficulties resuming normal routines within a few weeks or months after the incident.
 - Thoughts of harming themselves or others.
 - Use of unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as alcohol or drug use or other high-risk behaviors.

Recommended Wingman Action

- Most important is ensuring the victim is in a safe location and is away from the accused.
- If there is an immediate threat to the victim's safety, contact military law enforcement or local police immediately.
- Recognize that the victim may need to exercise as much control as possible over his/her circumstances to include the decision to report the incident, obtain a sexual assault forensic medical exam, or tell friends/family about the incident, etc. If you are an individual who is deemed a mandatory reporter, it is critical to inform the victim of this duty.
- Encourage the victim to report the sexual assault to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program (Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), SAPR Victim Advocate (VA) or Volunteer VA) so he/she can discuss applicable reporting options and resources. If you are an individual who is deemed a mandatory reporter, it is critical to inform the victim of this duty.
- Listen and engage in quiet support. Constant conversation is not necessary.
- Avoid being judgmental or placing blame.
- Assist with or provide transportation to the SARC, the hospital or law enforcement as needed.
- Reinforce that the sexual assault was not the victim's fault.
- Recognize that the impact of sexual assault can be long-term. Counseling and therapy can help victims cope and heal.
- Continue to be aware of the victim's status and needs even after the initial adjustment period has passed.

Leadership Considerations

- Notify the SARC and military law enforcement.
- Ensure the victim's safety by taking actions that minimize contact with the accused as necessary.
- Consider the victim's concerns about returning to his/her job. Engage with the victim for feedback on needs that will facilitate a smooth transition back to work. Ensure the victim is aware of all options and resources available.
- Be aware of how the incident is impacting the victim's family and mobilize support as appropriate.



- If the alleged assailant is another Active Duty member, work with that individual's Command to address any safety concerns.
- If victim appears to be coping poorly, consider any duty restrictions that might be required to maintain safety and prevent accidents.
- Consult with the Mental Health Clinic about how to best address the victim's mental health needs.
- Realize that the legal investigation can be extremely distressing (for both the victim and the alleged assailant) regardless of whether it is handled by military or civilian law enforcement. Assess his/her level of distress and provide support as necessary.