

U.S. Army Institutes Updated Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program

April designated National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), is an opportune time to showcase the Army's updated SHARP Program. The Army instituted the program in 2009 with the goal of eliminating sexual harassment and assault from the service. The program is an affirmation to U.S. Army Soldiers, civilians, and the Army community that sexual assault is unacceptable, a criminal offense, and against the Army values.

The Army launched the SHARP Program to combat and prevent sexual harassment and assault through education and training, and also to strengthen the investigation and prosecution processes that follow these offenses. With more than 1,800 sexual assault convictions within the Army since Sept. 11, 2001, Army leaders are determined to stop these offenses now and eradicate future incidents. Secretary of the Army Pete Geren stressed the severity of sexual assault within the Army: "Sexual assault is a crime everywhere, but in the Army it is a crime that is more than just a crime against the victim. In the Army, it is a crime against the core values that bind our Army together."

Campaign

A key initiative of the SHARP Program is the I. A.M. STRONG campaign, which includes training, education, and workshops on appropriate action needed for sexual assault prevention. The campaign's goal is to teach Soldiers how to prevent sexual assault by addressing the root of the problem: attitudes and perceptions that encourage sexual harassment, innuendos, or egregious assault, which can then lead to sexual assault. Creating an environment free of these

factors will foster an Army that respects all of its members. A true environmental change will not be established until sexual harassment and assault are completely eliminated from the Army.

A core component of the campaign is the involvement and moral duty of those not directly involved with the crime to prevent the assaults. As Geren proclaimed, “In the Army, there is no bystander. Every Soldier is his brother’s and sister’s keeper.”

The I. A.M. STRONG pledge is to:

- Intervene — When I recognize a threat to my fellow Soldiers, I will have the personal courage to intervene and prevent sexual assault. I will condemn acts of sexual harassment. I will not abide obscene gestures, language, or behavior. I am a warrior and a member of a team. I will intervene.
- Act — You are my brother, my sister, my fellow Soldier. It is my duty to stand up for you, no matter the time or place. I will take action. I will do what’s right. I will prevent sexual harassment and assault. I will not tolerate sexually offensive behavior. I will act.
- Motivate — We are American Soldiers, motivated to keep our fellow Soldiers safe. It is our mission to prevent sexual harassment and assault. We will denounce sexual misconduct. As Soldiers, we are all motivated to take action. We are strongest together.

Victim Advocacy

In addition to eradicating sexual harassment and assault from the Army community, the SHARP Program also aims to increase victim advocacy through confidential reporting and response and

assailant accountability. Sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in both the Nation and the Army. Army officials hope that the new program processes will foster trust and confidence in sexual assault victims and encourage them to report their crimes.

To ensure sexual assault incidents are properly investigated and offenders are appropriately prosecuted, the Army is establishing 15 special victim prosecutor positions, an additional 30 special investigator positions at 22 of the Army's largest installations, and 7 highly qualified expert positions to assist U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command agents.

Army Community

As part of the Army community, we all have an obligation to uphold the Army values and work to eradicate sexual harassment and assault. This applies not only to Soldiers in the ranks, but to every Army civilian and contractor, as well.

For additional information, visit the SHARP Program Web site at

<http://www.preventsexualassault.army.mil> and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center SAAM Web site at **<http://www.nsvrc.org/saam>**.