

United States Air Force



Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategy

2015

We are pleased to present the United States Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategy. This strategy lays the framework necessary to reach our Service goals of realizing an Air Force free from sexual assault and effectively responding to the crime until that vision is achieved.

Over the last few years, the Air Force has experienced a rise in sexual assault reports coupled with a decrease in reported incidents. This suggests that our care for sexual assault victims has fostered an improved relationship of trust between Air Force leadership and our Airmen. We must continue to establish and improve that trust. It is the most important step in restoring communities; if we don't know an assault has occurred, we cannot take steps necessary for recovery. We must also continue to fine tune our response systems to ensure we always offer the very best care possible to those who have suffered from this horrific crime. This important work must be done in parallel with our efforts to protect the Constitutional rights of Airmen who are accused of this crime.

To date, the Air Force has predominantly focused on sexual assault awareness and response. Enduring care and recovery of sexual assault victims will continue to be one of the Air Force's top priorities. But to realize an Air Force free from sexual assault, we must also work diligently to prevent the crime before it occurs.

A strong foundation for sexual assault prevention and response demands a culture of dignity and respect. Treating everyone with respect is inherent to our Core Values of Integrity, Service, and Excellence. The Air Force will use policy, programs, education and training to shape the environment, maintain the health and wellbeing of our Airmen, and change attitudes and behaviors so that sexual assault is no longer perpetrated.

The success of this strategy is contingent upon all Airmen. We must develop Airmen who demonstrate courageous leadership and promote a safe, healthy environment with zero tolerance for this crime; who are able to provide empathy, remain neutral during investigations; and who refrain from reprisal and retaliation.

We cannot treat sexual assault prevention and response as a short-term campaign. Instead, we will employ a comprehensive, ongoing approach that delivers developmental education and training throughout every Airman's career.

While our prevention goal is to realize an Air Force free from sexual assault, as long as we have even one victim, we will not lose sight of our responsibility to care for that Airman and to seek justice through a process that is fair to both the victim and the accused. We will continue to provide world-class care and improve the services we offer victims. Sexual assault and its impact on our Airmen and communities directly effects mission readiness. Every Airman is critical to our Air Force mission to Fly, Fight, and Win! We must all be part of the solution.



Deborah Lee James
Secretary of the Air Force



Mark A. Welsh III
General, USAF
Chief of Staff



James A. Cody
Chief Master Sergeant
of the Air Force

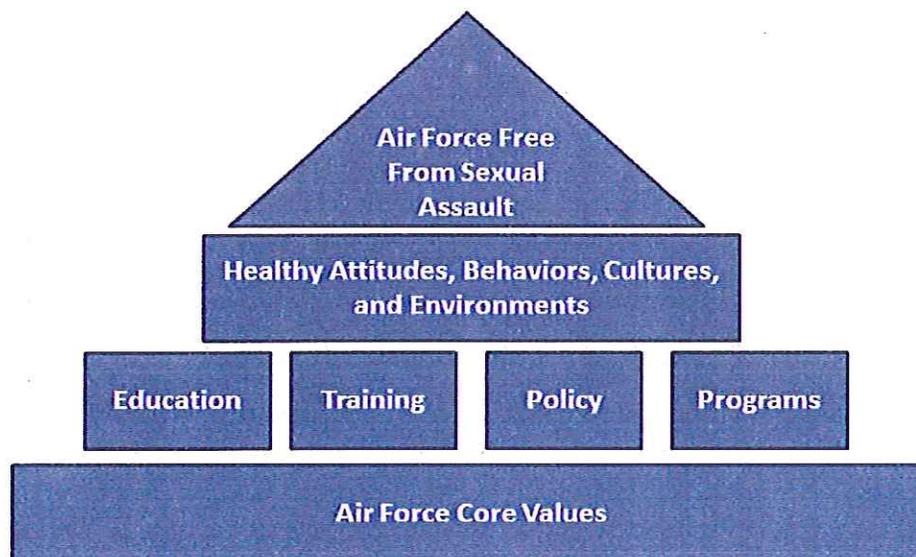
Part 1: Sexual Assault Prevention

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

On April 30, 2014, the Department of Defense (DoD) released the 2014-2016 Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy. The DoD strategy provided a framework to guide the prevention activities within each service. Each service was charged with operationalizing the strategy and putting it into action. This document will not restate every detail in the DoD strategy, but it will provide key details for the contextual purpose of this Air Force strategy.

The goal of the Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy is to realize an Air Force free from sexual assault. The foundation of the strategy is a scientifically derived conceptualization of how the risk for perpetration develops over time. The factors that put an individual at risk for perpetration are the targets of our prevention activities. An individual may be at risk for perpetration as a result of unhealthy experiences he/she may have had; unhealthy beliefs that support violence, and unhealthy relationships, such as peer groups, that promote antisocial or risky sexuality and behaviors. These unhealthy experiences, attitudes and behaviors take shape in and sustain cultures and environments in which sexual assault, including sexual hazing, is tolerated or condoned.

The attitudes, behaviors, relationships, and environments that increase an individual's risk for sexual assault perpetration are inconsistent with Air Force Core Values and represent multiple opportunities for prevention. Therefore, education, training, policies, and programs to reduce attitudinal, behavioral, experiential, and cultural risk factors will be built upon Air Force Core Values. *Figure 1* below depicts how the alignment of environmental and individual factors with Core Values will lead to an Air Force free from sexual assault.



Air Force Core Values are the foundation on which education, training, policy, and programs are built. Embracing our Core Values in this area will foster healthy attitudes, behaviors, cultures, and environments to reach an Air Force Free From Sexual Assault.

Figure 1

FUNDAMENTALS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION

Sexual assault prevention is critical to the health, morale, and welfare of Airmen and ultimately essential to Air Force readiness. The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy reflects the following tenets: preventing violence before it occurs; preventing perpetration; promoting prevention at every level; and, providing ongoing prevention activities that reflect the unique roles and development of each Airman.

Preventing Violence Before it Occurs. An understanding of sexual assault prevention is necessary to implement this strategy. Three levels of prevention—primary, secondary and tertiary—are defined based on *when* the prevention is delivered. Primary prevention is the only level of prevention that aims to stop a sexual assault before it occurs and, as such, is the focus of this strategy. Activities that occur after the assault are response and are addressed in the Sexual Assault Response Strategy.

Preventing Perpetration. Perpetrators are ultimately responsible for the offenses they commit, and preventing perpetration is the only guarantee to stop violence from ever occurring. Therefore, the focus of this strategy is on preventing perpetration. Perpetration may be prevented by reducing risk factors associated with perpetration, empowering bystanders to intervene in risky situations and to speak out against sexist jokes, sexual harassment, and hazing, thereby creating a culture in which sexual assault is not tolerated.

Promoting Prevention At Every Level. Because risk factors can occur within the individual, peer group, or culture, prevention strategies are maximized when they are implemented at every level to ensure healthy behaviors are consistently reinforced. In this way, individual skills are reinforced by peers, leaders, and policy. In line with the DoD strategy, the Air Force strategy promotes a comprehensive prevention approach that ensures that prevention messages and skills are consistent and reinforced across the different environments in which an Airman may live and work.

Providing Ongoing Prevention Activities. A key long-term objective of this strategy is to provide every Airman with standardized, developmental education and training throughout their career strengthening our Air Force culture of dignity and respect and sustaining an environment that is inhospitable to sexual assault perpetrators. Effective enhanced developmental education and training will target the population and behaviors of individuals, groups, and cultures which are directly related to primary prevention. Air Force policies and programs provide safeguards and program expectations as well as ensure consistency, credibility, replication, and support.

COMMAND, PLANNING, AND ASSESSMENT

The nature and complexity of sexual violence requires Headquarters Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office, Major Commands, and Installations to establish complementary working relationships with multiple functional communities to prevent sexual assault.

The operational approach uses education, training, policies, and programs throughout an Airman's career to create a deep understanding of sexual assault prevention and response and to provide skills necessary to prevent sexual assault.

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office continuously conducts research and assesses education and training effectiveness to determine when and where to make adjustments in order to attain the end state – an Air Force free from sexual assault.

ORGANIZING FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION

The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office is the primary point of oversight for sexual assault prevention. Several Air Force stakeholders work together on policy, programs, education, and training where there is a direct or indirect tie to sexual assault prevention. The key integrator of Air Force sexual assault prevention initiatives and for all intra-agency coordination is the Air Force Senior Key Leader Board.

Additionally, the Air Force follows DoD policy and works with sister services and outside experts to share lessons learned and to stay current on the most up-to-date science behind sexual assault prevention and response.

Within the Air Force, sexual assault prevention policy, programs, education and training are executed at the major command and installation levels. Prevention support and delivery systems will be developed that build a prevention infrastructure at the major command and installation levels and facilitate development, implementation and evaluation of the prevention strategy.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

The Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy uses education, training, policies and programs to provide Airmen the capabilities necessary to realize an Air Force free from sexual assault. The strategy includes the following objectives:

Educate the Force

Sexual assault has a direct impact on Air Force readiness. The Air Force goal in educating the force on sexual assault prevention is to enable Airmen to directly link sexual assault prevention to mission readiness. Sexual assault education transitions an Airman from a basic awareness to a deep understanding of sexual assault prevention. Throughout the education lifecycle, Airmen develop the powers of reasoning and judgment associated with sexual assault prevention.

Train the Force

The Air Force cannot rely on education alone to prevent sexual assault. Airmen must be equipped with the skills necessary to take action when appropriate to stop a sexual assault before it happens. The Air Force goal in training the force on sexual assault prevention is to provide skills that enable Airmen to take action(s) either directly or indirectly to prevent sexual assault before it occurs.

Develop and Implement Policy

Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response policy provides safeguards and expectations through defined solutions of known situations while ensuring consistency in application. Policy

is developed in a collaborative way with expert advice from various sexual assault prevention stakeholders.

The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office is primarily responsible for all sexual assault policy development and maintenance. The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office ensures compliance with and adherence to all DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response policies, guidance and strategies. Additionally, the Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office supports Air Force compliance with legislation pertaining to sexual assault prevention and response.

Prevention will be embraced and realized at every level of the Air Force, and the installations and major commands are the primary delivery points of prevention.

Develop and Implement Programs

Air Force programs allow for routine performance of a particular task that directly relates to sexual assault prevention. Programs exist to fill gaps where policy, education and training cannot reach an intended target.

Strategic Foundation

The strategic context, the fundamentals of prevention, the organizational structure and the objectives come together to form the bedrock of the 2015 Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy. *Figure 2* highlights the elements that represent the foundation of this strategy.

The strategy as outlined in this document does not provide substantial detail about the theoretical basis of the strategy or the specific actions that will be required for its implementation and success. Those details are included in other documents which operationalize how the strategic context, fundamentals of prevention, organizational structure, and objectives will work in concert to create an Air Force free from sexual assault.

Strategic Context:

- Promote healthy attitudes and behaviors that decrease risk for assault
- Foster environments and culture where dignity and respect remain paramount
- Align all attitudes, behaviors, environments and cultures with the Air Force Core Values

Fundamentals of Prevention:

- Prevent violence before it occurs
- Prevent perpetration
- Promote prevention at every level
- Provide ongoing prevention activities that reflect the unique roles and development of each Airman

Organizing Structure:

- Leadership from The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office coordinated with intra-agency collaboration
- MAJCOM and installation prevention delivery systems
- Ongoing review and input from appropriate stakeholders

Objectives:

- Educate the force
- Train the force
- Develop and implement policy
- Develop and implement programs

Figure 2

Part 2: Sexual Assault Response

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

On January 26, 2015, the Department of Defense (DoD) released the 2015 Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategic Plan. The DoD strategic plan provided a framework to guide the prevention and response activities within each service. Each service was charged with operationalizing the plan and putting it into action. As such, this document will not restate every detail in the DoD strategic plan, but it will provide key details for the contextual purpose of the Air Force Sexual Assault Response Strategy.

Response is a complex process that involves four primary entities: the victim/survivor, subject, the response system, and the Air Force community. Each entity has a unique role in sexual assault response, so each section of the strategy will be broken down by response entity.

The goals of the response strategy are **recognition, recovery, and return to duty** for the victim/survivor and the Air Force community; **prevention of escalation, due process, and justice** for the subject of the crime; and **collaboration** within the response system to achieve world-class care and support for the victim and to prevent retaliation. As depicted in *Figure 3* below, these three goals combine to create a comprehensive response to sexual assault.

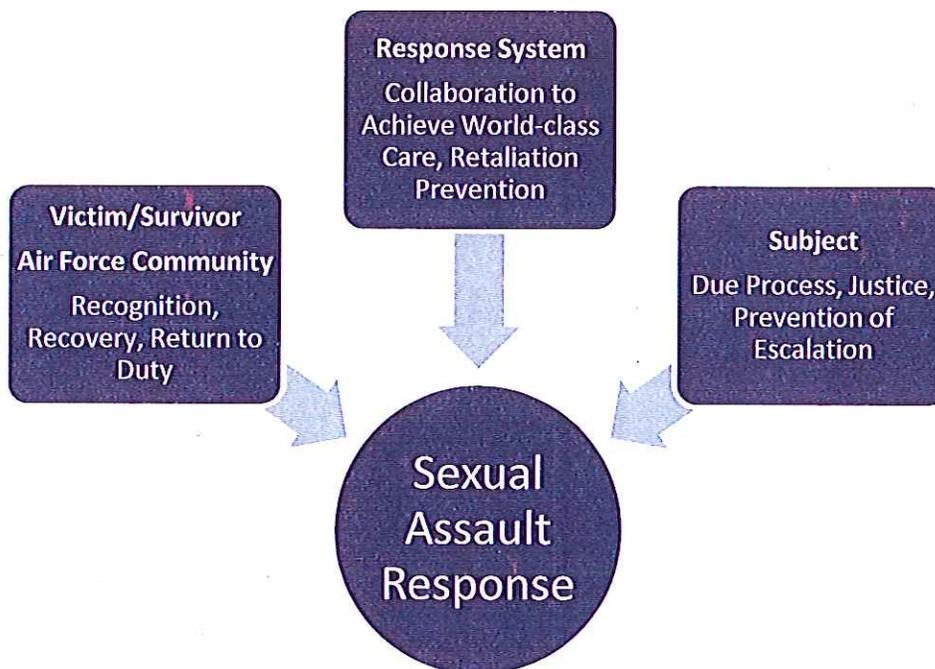


Figure 3

FUNDAMENTALS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE

Sexual assault response is the multifaceted process that is initiated once the crime of sexual assault is reported. Effectively responding is critical to the health, morale, and welfare of Airmen and ultimately essential to Air Force readiness. As noted above, the specific elements of

the response process vary based on entity. Below, the scope of response is defined for each entity.

Sexual Assault Victim/Survivor: Sexual assault victims/survivors are individuals who experience sexual assault. Fundamentals for victims/survivors include the following:

Empowering Victim Voice and Choice. While all crime victims have rights and confidentiality concerns, sexual assault victims' right to privacy are pronounced. Given the nature of the crime, allowing sexual assault victims the freedom of choice to make a restricted or unrestricted report enables each individual the ability to preserve the private details of his or her life. Additionally, the sexual assault victim maintains complete autonomy to accept services or participate in investigation activities after the assault. Freedom of choice is the critical first step to returning Victims to the mission.

Facilitate Healing. Sexual assault is often traumatic and the Air Force is committed to the recovery and restoration of those affected. To facilitate healing, Air Force professionals work with sexual assault victims to develop life-long trauma recovery skills.

Response System: The response system is comprised of the professional teams who are involved in the care of the victim or adjudication of the subject. *Figure 4* below illustrates the multiple components of the Air Force Response System.

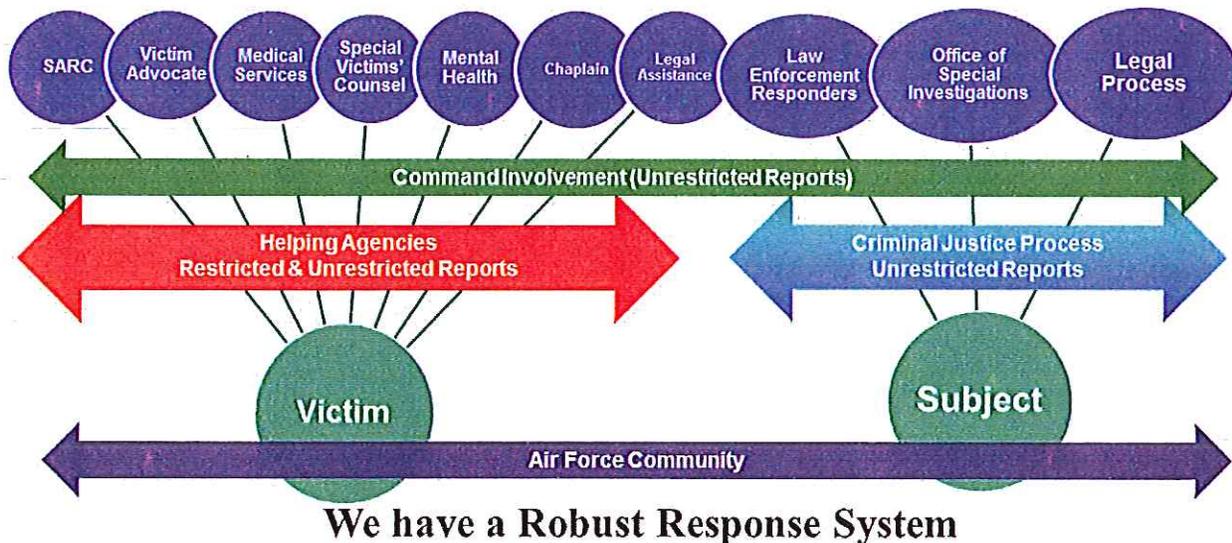


Figure 4

The fundamentals of the response system include the following:

World-class, Holistic Support/Care. Providing world-class care to victims of sexual assault is the Air Force's highest priority in response. The Air Force stands ready to provide the best care possible to sexual assault victims with services including Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim

Advocates, Volunteer Victim Advocates, Specialized Medical and Mental Health services, Victim Witness Assistance Program personnel and legal assistance, Special Victims' Counsel, and Special Victim Investigation and Prosecution Capability.

Intra-agency collaboration. The Air Force Senior Key Leader Board is also the intra-agency advisory committee that meets regularly to communicate and collaborate on a variety of issues impacting sexual assault prevention and response. The intra-agency collaboration enables a holistic approach to solving common problems shared across multiple functional communities.

Evolving care. As we learn more about those who experience sexual trauma and state of the art treatment procedures, professionals will undergo necessary training to ensure they have the most current skills to meet the unique needs of every Airman. In particular, based on the number of male Airmen who experience sexual assault, care is evolving to ensure male victim's needs are addressed in the response process.

Sexual Assault Subject: Sexual assault subjects are the individuals who are identified as alleged perpetrators in sexual assault incidents. Fundamentals for sexual assault subjects include the following:

Justice. The Air Force seeks jurisdiction over all alleged perpetrators subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, when deemed to be in the best interests of the victim and the Air Force, in order to ensure commanders have the opportunity to address their need for effective, mission-ready discipline through the military justice process. Inherent in our concept of justice is a system wherein Airmen's rights are protected by a robustly trained, resourced, independent defense bar. Additionally, Special Victims Investigation and Prosecution Capability ensures that specifically designated multi-disciplinary teams work collaboratively to thoroughly investigate and appropriately adjudicate all unrestricted reports of sexual assault. Because victims are given the opportunity to have cases prosecuted by civilian authorities, Air Force investigators and legal personnel have established relationships with civilian counterparts to ensure justice is met regardless of the forum choice.

Prevention of Escalation. The Air Force will take steps to effectively prevent sexual harassment and other behaviors on the sexual assault continuum known to create a climate inconsistent with our Core Values, and potentially conducive to sexual assault.

Air Force Community: The Air Force community includes all active, Guard and Reserve Airmen; civilian employees; families; and contractors. Fundamentals for the Air Force community include:

Awareness. Recognition of sexual assault as a crime and awareness of reporting options are critical to enabling victims/survivors to obtain services and initiate recovery.

Support for the Victim. Social support is essential to a victim's recovery and return to duty. Therefore, a primary role of the Air Force community is to provide social support, understanding and empathy to individuals who have experienced trauma, including sexual assault.

Prevention and Accountability for Retaliation. Sexual assault response is complex and, at times, lengthy. During the response and adjudication process, the Air Force must ensure the health, morale, and welfare of the entire community. Treating the victim and the subject of the crime with respect is critical to maintaining and restoring a healthy climate. Reprisal, ostracism and maltreatment--all forms of retaliation--are direct hindrances to the health, morale, and welfare of the community, and those who participate in or allow such activities must be held appropriately accountable.

Providing Ongoing Response Activities. A key long-term objective of this strategy is to provide every Airman with standardized, developmental education and training throughout their career ultimately sustaining an Air Force culture of dignity and respect and an environment that is inhospitable to sexual assault perpetrators. Standardized developmental education and training targets the population and behaviors of individuals, groups, and cultures as related to sexual assault response.

COMMAND, PLANNING, AND ASSESSMENT

To achieve the goals of this Response Strategy, the Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office must use a variety of tools to address this complex issue. Tools include: education and training for the Air Force community; policies and programs related to the victim/survivor and subject; and complementary working relationships with multiple functional communities to address the unique needs of all entities involved in sexual assault response.

Throughout an Airman's career, education and training will be used to create a deep understanding of sexual assault response, so Airmen are equipped to respond if they or someone they know has been affected by sexual assault. The response system uses advocacy and services to facilitate recovery of Airmen and communities affected by sexual assault.

The Headquarters Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office continually conducts research and assesses education and training effectiveness to determine when and where to make adjustments in order to maintain the best possible response systems.

ORGANIZING FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE

The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office is the Air Force lead for developing policy concerning non-intimate partner sexual assault prevention and integrated response. Several Air Force stakeholders work together on policy, programs, world-class care and advocacy, education, training, investigation and adjudication of sexual assault crimes. The key integrator of Air Force sexual assault prevention and response initiatives and for all intra-agency coordination is the Air Force Senior Key Leader Board.

Additionally, the Air Force follows DoD policy and works with sister services and outside experts to share lessons learned and to stay current on the most up-to-date science behind sexual assault prevention and response.

Within the Air Force, sexual assault response systems, policies, programs, education and training are executed at the major command and installation levels. The Sexual Assault Response

Coordinators at the major command and installation levels are key integrators for current and future sexual assault response initiatives. The installation commander, in collaboration with the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, uses the Case Management Group for intra-agency communication and collaboration at the installation level.

SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

The Sexual Assault Response Strategy uses education, training, policies and programs to provide Airmen the capabilities necessary to respond to a sexual assault. The Air Force provides world-class care and advocacy to victims of sexual assault as well as zealous protection of subjects. Finally, the Air Force investigates and appropriately adjudicates all unrestricted reports over which the Air Force exercises its jurisdiction. The strategy includes the following objectives:

Objectives related to the Air Force Community

Educate the Force: Sexual assault has a direct impact on Air Force readiness. The Air Force goal in educating the force on sexual assault response is to enable Airmen to be active participants in the healing process of Airmen and communities. Sexual assault education transitions an Airman from a basic awareness to a deep understanding of reporting options, response services available, how to respond to victims, and how to recognize, report, and respond to retaliation. Throughout the education lifecycle, Airmen develop the powers of reasoning and judgment associated with sexual assault response.

Train the Force: The Air Force cannot rely on education alone when it comes to sexual assault response. Airmen must be equipped with the skills necessary to take action, when appropriate, in response to a sexual assault. The Air Force goal in training the force on sexual assault response is to provide skills that enable Airmen to take action(s) either directly or indirectly to facilitate or participate in the recovery process. For example, providing information and tools for reporting retaliation enables Airmen to actively maintain a culture of respect for the victim and subject of the crime.

Objectives related to the Response System

Provide World-class Care to and Advocacy for Victims of Sexual Assault: The Air Force place's high priority on providing world-class care to and advocacy for sexual assault victims. The Air Force provides a team of highly qualified individuals from the medical and legal communities as well as advocates from the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office to assist sexual assault victims at their request.

Objectives related to the Sexual Assault Subject

Thoroughly, Impartially, and Expeditiously Investigate Unrestricted Reports: The Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) is the sole military criminal investigation organization responsible for investigating all unrestricted sexual assault reports over which the Air Force exercises jurisdiction. A thorough and impartial investigation is critical to the appropriate adjudication of sexual assault cases. All AFOSI agents receive extensive training directly related to conducting sexual assault investigations and are in compliance with the training requirements outlined in Department of Defense Instructions. Investigations completed by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations are enhanced by the participation of specially trained prosecutors and paralegals who together with the investigating agent comprise the Special Victims Investigation and Prosecution capability. AFOSI investigations are all independent, acting through The Inspector General under the direction of the Secretary of the Air Force.

Adjudicate Unrestricted Reports: Upon completion of a sexual assault investigation, AFOSI provides the Convening Authority and the Staff Judge Advocate a full report of the investigation. For cases over which the Air Force exercises jurisdiction, the Convening Authority, with the advice of the Staff Judge Advocate, decides how to proceed based on the evidence collected during the investigation. All unrestricted reports over which the Air Force exercises jurisdiction will be adjudicated with the utmost concern for the protection of the subject's and victim's rights, as expeditiously as possible, in a military justice system free of unlawful command influence.

Provide Robustly Trained, Independent Defense Counsel to all Subjects: In all sexual assault investigations, Airmen's rights will be protected by a robustly trained, resourced, independent defense bar.

Objectives related to the Victim/Survivor

Develop and Implement Policy: The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office is responsible for non-intimate partner sexual assault policy development and maintenance. Air Force policy is developed collaboratively with input from all sexual assault response stakeholders and subject matter experts. The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office ensures compliance with DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response policies, guidance and strategies. Additionally, the Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office supports Air Force compliance with legislation pertaining to sexual assault prevention and response. Sexual assault response will be embraced and realized at every level of the Air Force.

Develop and Implement Programs: Air Force programs allow for routine performance of a particular task that directly relates to sexual assault response. Programs exist to fill gaps where response systems, policy, education and training cannot reach an intended target.