

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
TERRI J. RAU, PH.D.
HEAD, POLICY AND PREVENTION SECTION (PERS-661G)
COUNSELING, ADVOCACY AND PREVENTION BRANCH
NAVY PERSONNEL COMMAND
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE ARMED FORCES
25 FEBRUARY 2004

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Introduction:

Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to share with you my perspective on the Navy's efforts to increase awareness, prevent, and respond to sexual assault. It has been my privilege for the past 10 years to work with and for the Navy, as it tackles this difficult challenge.

I am a Clinical Psychologist and have devoted my professional career to understanding and working in the fields of family violence and sexual assault. I first became aware of the Navy's efforts in these areas when I began working in military mental health. Having worked for a number of years within the civilian sector of a metropolitan area, I was immediately impressed with the Navy's forethought and progressive policies, practices and procedures. My respect only grew as I gained understanding of the sometimes conflicting challenges Navy commanders face every day. I have only passing knowledge and no personal experience working for the other military services. However, I bring to this hearing the perspective of having worked both outside and within the Navy system to improve our society's understanding of, and response to, family violence and sexual assault.

I thank you for your leadership and attention to this issue. We welcome the opportunity in the Navy to self-examine, share information on lessons learned, and improve our response to sexual assault.

Background:

It is important that the Navy Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI) Program is well grounded in current scientific knowledge and best practice. Toward this end, I believe it is useful to examine what is known about sexual assault in college populations. Comparisons to the Navy culture and population are perhaps appropriate in that colleges offer a relatively closed community of predominantly young people who are experiencing the freedom and responsibility of adulthood for the first time and who live in close, often co-educational quarters. Data from the National College Women Sexual Victimization Study is very informative. This was a telephone survey of almost 4500 women attending 2 and 4-year colleges in 1996. The study used a method similar to the National Crime Victimization Survey, with the exception of asking more behaviorally specific sexual victimization screening questions. The results were striking. The rate of attempted or completed rape was 27.7 per 1000 college females, a rate about 20 times that of the general population. Less than 5% of college women reported their completed or attempted rapes to law enforcement and less than half of the women who were raped by legal standards defined the incident as such. Victims of attempted or completed rape knew their offenders nine out of ten times. Most of the sexual assaults occurred at night, in living quarters. Factors that consistently increased the risk of sexual victimization for these women were: frequent alcohol intoxication, being single, and prior sexual assault victimization. Assuming that the parallel is not unreasonable, this data suggests that the military services face significant challenges in preventing and responding to sexual assault.

Program and Process:

To complement Admiral Mullen's testimony, I would like to provide more detail on how SAVI is structured and functions and then speak to program effectiveness. Admiral Mullen's written testimony already addresses current initiatives and program improvements. SAVI was established to provide a Navy-wide, comprehensive, standardized, victim-sensitive system to prevent and respond to sexual assault. The program epitomizes the coordinated community response in that it provides a series of overlapping protocols between key responders that ultimately increases the effectiveness of all responders. The program operates at both the installation and command level, which is essential for success given the Navy's operational tempo and mission.

At the installation level, the SAVI Coordination Committee includes, but is not limited to, representatives from medical, legal, security, Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS), Chaplains and Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC). The Coordination Committee is responsible for ensuring that sexual assault issues are addressed and all first responders are working together effectively as a team. The SAVI Program Coordinator is designated by the installation commander and usually works within the FFSC. SAVI Coordinators provide local program oversight and management, to include administration, management and supervision of military advocates, providing and facilitating SAVI/sexual awareness required training to all components, victim advocate training, and insuring availability of victim intervention services. All installations are required to provide 24/7 advocacy services for sexual assault victims, either through the use of trained military volunteers, community sexual assault resources or a combination thereof. Advocates respond immediately to calls from the victim, security, medical,

chief duty officer, NCIS or other official sources. SAVI advocates provide emotional support, assistance and information, help secure basic needs, and accompany victims to all interviews, examinations or legal proceedings if requested. SAVI advocates provide assistance to both active duty and adult family member victims. When requested, professional intervention services are available for victims through the FFSC, military mental health or referral to available civilian resources.

With respect to individual commands, the SAVI Point of Contact (POC) is designated by the commander to serve as the command's SAVI expert, implement and coordinate all required command training, and maintain current information regarding base or community victim services and resources for command members. In addition to SAVI POC's, SAVI Command Representatives are mature, responsible individuals who are designated by the commander after a sexual assault has been reported. They serve as a liaison between the victim or their support system and the command. Command Representatives provide a direct line of communication for the victim to the command executive level, enabling victims to voice safety concerns, express preferences and receive information on the command's response to the assault. The role of the Command Representative is generally more supportive and their responsibilities extend well beyond those of the Command Victim Assistance Coordinator, whose role is more administrative. All commands are also required to have a Data Collection Coordinator who is responsible for collecting and tracking initial, follow-on and final data regarding all alleged sexual assaults involving either active duty, adult family members or occurring on Navy property. This information is forwarded in Unit SITREPs and is collected from key responders to avoid revictimization. SAVI required data is forwarded to headquarters for the purpose of

analyzing trends to assess program operation and guide program development and, as such, does not contain any identifying information with respect to either the victim or offender.

Maximizing victim privacy is paramount within the SAVI Program. Deploying/afloat commands are encouraged to have trained military advocates aboard to respond to sexual assaults that occur away from Navy installation resources. Over 300 deploying commands had trained advocates aboard this year. Anecdotally, our active duty advocates often become the most vocal supporters of SAVI. It is important to note that the SAVI instruction specifically provides protocols for afloat commands, both when cases are reported in port and when deployed, as well as commander's guidelines for responding to sexual assault.

Awareness and prevention education is a key component within the SAVI Program. Training on sexual assault awareness and SAVI is provided at every initial accession point, throughout the leadership continuum schools, and during Navy-wide, annual mandatory General Military Training (GMT). We have specifically taken onboard the college data described above in developing the mandatory GMT materials for FY-05. I have personally briefed SAVI, on a recurring basis, to prospective commanding and executive officers, Command Master Chiefs and other senior enlisted. I have generally found them to be receptive and committed to effective leadership in this difficult area. The FFSC 2002 Leadership Survey clearly indicated that command leadership, at all levels, recognizes the need for assistance outside the command to successfully respond to sexual assault. Increasing general awareness and gaining command leadership support of SAVI requires ongoing effort, due largely to leadership rotation and accession, but is critical to program success. SAVI functions most effectively in commands where strong zero tolerance messages are communicated from the top down, there is leadership

by example, and there are clear expectations with regard to compliance with Navy standards of conduct and SAVI requirements.

Although I understand the importance of an effective criminal justice response to sexual assault, both to enhance empowerment and resolution for victims and to insure community safety, I am as concerned with ensuring that there is readily available victim support, advocacy and, when necessary, professional intervention. Sensitivity to the sexual assault victim is a strong theme within SAVI and is evident in Navy policies that:

- guard victim privacy by limiting “need to know” personnel and providing mechanisms for data collection and tracking that do not rely on victim identity,
- reassure victims that reporting was the right thing to do while affording them choice with regard to participating in military law enforcement investigation or reporting sexual assaults that fall under civilian jurisdiction,
- provide multiple avenues to receive information about their rights under applicable law and the Victim and Witness Assistance Program, and
- consider, if at all feasible, the victim’s preference regarding reassignment if the alleged offender is from the same command.

Program Effectiveness:

SAVI is a vital and active program within FFSCs. In FY-02, FFSCs reported over 107,000 SAVI-related contacts including awareness and prevention education activities, command consultation, victim assistance and advocacy, information and referral, GMT, and command leadership training.

In a 2002 survey of SAVI patrons who received prevention training/GMT or advocacy services, there were no negative program ratings with respect to user satisfaction. Outcomes for those who received advocacy services were particularly striking. Over 95% of respondents indicated that SAVI showed concern for sailors and their families, while the program contributed to their overall quality of life and their readiness for 88% and 78%, respectively. All respondents who received advocacy services indicated that SAVI helped them cope at least somewhat with the sexual assault and 88% indicated that it helped quite a lot or more.

Finally, I would like to mention that SAVI has been recognized for its efforts by several agencies outside of the Department of Defense. In 1996, the National Organization of Victim Assistance presented SAVI with a Distinguished Service to Victims of Crime Award. SAVI received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime in 1999, in recognition of the program's dedication to victims' rights.

Summary and Conclusion:

While SAVI lays a solid foundation, we recognize that there is always room for improvement in our efforts to prevent sexual assault and to offer the best possible support, safety and justice for victims, their family members and the Navy community. Thank you for holding these hearings and for your continued support as we pursue this important challenge. I look forward to answering your questions.