

## INFORMATION PAPER

IIMWR-FP  
9 July 2009

**SUBJECT:** Victim Advocacy Program Services Available to Support Soldiers and Family Members Affected by Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault.

1. **PURPOSE:** To provide an overview of the Army's Victim Advocacy Program.

2. **FACTS:**

a. In 2003, the Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence recommended that the Military Service branches establish comprehensive and coordinated Victim Advocacy (VA) Programs.

b. On 12 September 2004, the Army institutionalized the VA Program under the Family Advocacy Program umbrella to support victims of domestic violence and established a contract that provided 88 victim advocates. Currently there are a total of 148 installation victim advocates assigned at 80 installations throughout the Army (120 centrally contracted, 9 locally contracted, and 19 National Security Personnel Service victim advocates). Family Advocacy Program (FAP) Managers provide advocacy services at installations where the Soldier population is less than 5,000.

c. On 19 September 2004, FMWRC was directed through the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Action Plan to extend advocacy services to Soldier victims of sexual assault, thus the VA contract was modified to provide services to victims of sexual assault in February 2005.

d. Victim Advocates are highly qualified professionals who have experience in working with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and possess at minimum, a bachelors degree in Social Work, Psychology or in a related field.

e. The VA's primary function is to provide non-clinical advocacy services and support to victims. Duties include 24/7 crisis intervention, assistance with filing restricted and unrestricted reports, safety planning, information, referral, and assistance in accessing medical, legal, mental health, and chaplaincy services.

f. **FY08: Advocacy Services Provided:**

(1) Assisted victims with filing over 4,945 Victim Reporting Preference Reports for domestic abuse. Of the total reports filed, 4,568 were unrestricted and 377 were restricted.

(2) Assisted victims in filing over 1,528 Victim Reporting Preference Reports for sexual assault. Of the total reports filed, 1,256 were unrestricted and 272 were restricted.

(3) Assisted victims with the completion of over 4,600 safety plans.

(4) Provided after hour/crisis intervention services to over 3,191 victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

(5) Accompanied 3,261 victims to medical, investigative and court appointments.

g. FY08 Program Initiatives:

(1) December 2008: Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate Lethality Assessment and Safety Planning Training: A total of 130 VAs, FAP Managers, and FAP Social Workers participated in the training facilitated by FMWRC. This scenario-based training provided an overview of the VA's role in facilitating non-clinical lethality assessments and safety plans and focused on strategies for developing team approaches to preventing high risk/lethal domestic abuse situations.

(2) January 2009: Created a survey to solicit feedback on the types of beneficial training for victim advocates. Utilized technology (myarmylifetoo.com) to engage stakeholders in the survey and received a total of 186 useful responses from FAPMs, Victim Advocates, and Chiefs of Social Work Services.

(3) March 2009: Created and disseminated a VA Self Inspection Checklist as a tool for FAPMs/VAs to prepare for Army Community Service Accreditation and to ensure compliance with policies directed by Department of Army and Department of Defense.

(4) March 2009: Disseminated the VA/Domestic Abuse Records SOP to IMCOM regions for staffing. Field feedback will be incorporated into SOP and released when final.

(5) April 2009: Conducted two Virtual VA Pilot Training sessions with VAs at 10 installations in the WEST and EURO regions. Participant's feedback will be incorporated and the final training and will be rolled-out Army-wide in Jul 09.

(6) April 2009: Revised the Victim Advocacy Competency Course CD-ROM to incorporate information on the Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault Restricted Reporting policies. Converted the CD-ROM format to meet Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act requirement, which extends access to visual and hearing impaired users.

(7) Conducted quarterly spot checks to ensure that helpline phone numbers are operational and that VAs responds time was within standard 20 minutes requirement.

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