

DoD Safe Helpline Info Paper

Transitioning Service Members: An Educational Module for Civilian Sexual Assault Service Providers

Transitioning Service Members: An Educational Module for Civilian Sexual Assault Service Providers (SASPs) is a self-guided online educational module designed to help civilian SASPs assist Service members who are survivors of sexual assault as they transition out of the military. This module provides SASPs information on military structure and culture, the transition process, additional needs for those leaving the military, and available resources to address those needs. The module also includes details about some of the unique challenges survivors of sexual assault who are transitioning out of the military may face and explains how SASPs can leverage their existing skills and available resources to better assist these individuals. This free module can be completed anonymously via the app and Safe Helpline website.

Background

Transitioning out of the military can be a stressful time and it may be especially difficult for survivors of sexual assault who feel overwhelmed by the process or are unsure about how to access care. Civilian SASPs provide essential support in their communities through advocacy, counseling, emotional support, peer support, information, and with the resources they offer survivors. Transitioning Service Members (TSMs) may reach out to civilian SASPs as they build¹ or rebuild their support system related to sexual assault.

This module was developed to provide civilian SASPs with the additional information they need to support TSMs during and after their transition process.

Learning Objectives for the Module

Upon completing the *Transitioning Service Members: An Educational Module for Civilian Sexual Assault Service Providers* civilian SASPs will be able to:

- Identify key aspects of military culture that may facilitate or serve as a barrier to reporting, or that may influence the experience of sexual assault for survivors transitioning out of the military
- Examine the unique challenges faced by TSM survivors of sexual assault in order to identify appropriate support resources
- Identify Department of Defense (DoD), Veterans Affairs (VA), and other resources available for TSMs and survivors of sexual assault
- Evaluate Safe Helpline tools that can support TSM survivors of sexual assault

What can I expect to learn from the module?

This module consists of five self-paced units that you can start, stop, and resume at any time. The entire module will take approximately one hour to complete.

Unit 1 – Military Structure and Culture (*approximately 15 minutes*)

Knowing how the military is structured and central aspects of the military's unique culture is key to understanding today's armed forces. Information specific to language, traditions, rank, and social customs will be described to explain the context of being a Service member.

Unit 2 – Transitioning Service Members (*approximately 20 minutes*)

Service members transitioning out of the military are not just leaving a job, but are leaving a way of life, a structure, and a culture that they have been part of, often for many years. The circumstances under which a Service member may leave the military and the transition process are described in this unit. In addition, healthcare, mental health, employment, and housing needs that TSMs may have and the existing Veterans Affairs and civilian resources available to address these needs will be explored.

Unit 3 – Unique Challenges TSMs May Experience (*approximately 15 minutes*)

TSMs who are survivors of sexual assault may experience unique challenges and stressors during the transition process. Important statistics, Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs (VA) definitions, core DoD and VA service providers, and the available military reporting options are explored in the context of sexual assault. Additionally, internal and external protective factors and the impact of specific stressors on TSMs will be reviewed. Finally, there is an overview of the types of challenges, such as the process of finding new care providers, that are important for you to consider when assisting a TSM.

Unit 4 – Why TSMs May Leverage SASPs & How SASPs Can Help (*approximately 7 minutes*)

As SASPs are uniquely qualified to support survivors of sexual assault and are often seen as resources in their communities, TSMs may reach out to SASPs for support. The focus of this unit includes the reasons TSMs may leverage SASPs and ways in which you can support TSMs by utilizing existing skills and offering new resources. Furthermore, you will be provided with practical ideas for supporting TSMs, such as important questions to ask and using the empowerment model to help TSMs find the most appropriate resources to rebuild their support system.

Unit 5 – Overview of Safe Helpline (*approximately 10 minutes*)

Safe Helpline is the DoD's sole 24/7, world-wide, anonymous and confidential hotline for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. As a SASP, it is important to know about the resources Safe Helpline offers that can be leveraged to assist TSMs. In this unit, the services Safe Helpline offers and how these services can be used, both by SASPs and by TSMs, will be reviewed. Finally, the Transitioning Service Member Resource Search tool is introduced.

How can I access the online program?

You can access the online module either on a computer or a mobile device through the Safe Helpline website and mobile app.