



Legal Professionals Toolkit:

How Safe Helpline Can Support Your Work as an SVC/VLC

Updated December 2021



DoD
Safe Helpline
.....
Sexual Assault Support for the DoD Community



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Overview and Objectives

Goal & Objectives

Thank you for your interest in the Safe Helpline Legal Professionals Toolkit. Leveraging Safe Helpline in your work can help support survivors in your community and raise awareness of the support available for survivors, friends and family members, and anyone in the DoD community affected by sexual assault. The purpose of this toolkit is to provide easy ways to share Safe Helpline with your community and your clients through your work as a Special Victims' Counsel (SVC) or Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC).

The objectives of this toolkit are to:

- Inform military legal professionals about Safe Helpline.
- Provide ideas to highlight Safe Helpline in your work.

Language Note

Safe Helpline primarily uses the term "survivor" but uses the term "victim" when referencing statutes that use the term "victim". "Survivor" often refers to someone who is going through, or has gone through, the recovery process.

Timing

While sharing information about Safe Helpline is always helpful for the community, you may want to implement the ideas shared in this toolkit at certain times of year. For example, April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) and is a good time to include Safe Helpline in your communications and participate in conversations about sexual assault prevention and response in your community.

Using this Toolkit

This toolkit contains:

- Background information about Safe Helpline services, security protocols, and staff training.
- Ways to share Safe Helpline resources through promotional materials, long-form written content, social media, graphics, and more.

The content in this toolkit has been approved for use by the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (DoD SAPRO). However, please ensure that you also receive any necessary approvals from your Service and base leadership prior to posting or using the materials in the toolkit.

About Safe Helpline

Launched in 2011, the Department of Defense (DoD) Safe Helpline is the Department's sole secure, confidential, and anonymous crisis support service specially designed for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. Safe Helpline is available 24/7, worldwide. The DoD Safe Helpline staff provides live, one-on-one support to survivors, their families, and other DoD stakeholders. It is operated by RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), a national anti-sexual violence organization, through a contract with the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO).

Safe Helpline was created to meet the unique needs of survivors in the DoD, who may have challenges accessing support because of operational, geographic, and other constraints. The anonymous nature of Safe Helpline services ensures that Safe Helpline is a key source of support for Service members who might not otherwise reach out for help through military channels, and can be the first step in the reporting process. Safe Helpline is a reliable and trusted resource for members of the DoD community, including Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and SAPR Victim Advocates (VAs) wishing to connect survivors with additional resources, and is a safe and confidential space for friends, family members, co-workers, military leaders, and responders seeking information and tools to better support the survivors in their lives.

Safe Helpline serves:

- Adult Service members in the Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve Component, as well as the Coast Guard, and their dependents 18 years of age and older.
- DoD civilian employees and their family dependents 18 years of age and older when they are stationed or performing duties outside of the United States.
- U.S. citizen DoD contractor personnel when they are authorized to accompany Armed Forces in a contingency operation OCONUS and their U.S. citizen employees.

Adult military dependent sexual assault victims who are assaulted by a spouse or intimate partner and military dependent sexual assault victims who are 17 years of age and younger are supported through the the Family Advocacy Program (FAP). Due to the anonymity of the Safe Helpline hotline service, no questions to confirm eligibility are asked prior to providing support. Therefore, anyone contacting Safe Helpline will receive crisis intervention support by Safe Helpline staff. If, during the conversation, an individual indicates that they are not affiliated with the DoD, and not eligible for Safe Helpline services, hotline staff can provide appropriate civilian or military resources, such as the National Sexual Assault Hotline.

Safe Helpline also operates as the DoD's Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Hotline for all Military Correctional Facilities.

safehelpline.org      877-995-5247

DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) | 4800 Mark Center Drive, Room 07G21 | Alexandria, VA 22311-8000 | 571-372-2657

User Safety and Anonymity

How does Safe Helpline remain anonymous?

All Safe Helpline services are completely anonymous and confidential. RAINN's proprietary technology is helping Safe Helpline continue to meet the needs of survivors, their friends and family, and stakeholders every day. So, how does the technology work?

- IP addresses are never logged.
- Session transcripts are not recorded or saved.
- All data is encrypted.
- All routing is done anonymously.
- Members of the DoD community can access help from anywhere through the DoD Safe Helpline website and the Safe Helpline app.

Does Safe Helpline ask any prerequisite or screening questions of visitors?

No, Safe Helpline does not screen users who access services. Safe Helpline staff never ask questions about Service or rank, or for any identifying information. The only questions staff routinely ask during every session are during an initial safety check and review of some basic protocol, including:

- Checking in around physical safety.
- Reviewing what to do if the chat/call is disconnected.
- Addressing any computer safety or privacy concerns.

What will happen if a user shares personal information with Safe Helpline staff?

To maintain anonymity, if a user starts to share personally identifying information (PII) with staff, they'll kindly be reminded that Safe Helpline does not require any personal information to support a visitor's needs.

No PII shared this way will ever be documented or recorded. However, if a user shares information that falls under one of the exceptions to confidentiality, a Safe Helpline staff member may be required by law to file a mandatory report. These exceptions to confidentiality include any of the following situations: threats to harm others; exhibits suicidal ideation; or neglect and abuse of a child, disabled individual, or the elderly. In the event that this occurs, staff are trained to explain what mandatory reporting means and will support the user through the process.

Safe Helpline Staff

Who are Safe Helpline staff?

Safe Helpline is made up of approximately 60 professionals from a variety of backgrounds who all share a passion to support survivors of sexual assault in the DoD community. Before a Safe Helpline staff member is able to begin taking calls and chats they must be cleared by a licensed clinician (licensed social worker, counselor, etc.) to ensure they are ready to support survivors. Communication between a victim and Safe Helpline staff are protected from disclosure in cases arising under the Uniform Code of Military Justice in accordance with [Military Rules of Evidence \(MRE\) 514 - Victim-Victim Advocate Privilege](#).

How are Safe Helpline staff trained?

All Safe Helpline staff complete more than 60 hours of extensive, trauma-informed training according to National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) guidelines. All Safe Helpline staff receive enough training to be certified through the National Advocate Credentialing Program, which is the civilian equivalent to the DoD Sexual Assault Advocate Credentialing Program (D-SAACP) that certifies SARCs and SAPR VAs.

The training covers:

- Active listening & empathy
- Crisis intervention
- How to talk to survivors
- Neurobiology of trauma
- Military culture & traditions
- Reporting options & military-specific resources

Are Safe Helpline staff trained to support military personnel?

Safe Helpline staff receive specialized training to provide support and resources to military communities. The training curriculum was developed with oversight and information from DoD SAPRO and all of the individual Service SAPR offices.

The military-specific training covers:

- Effective responses to the needs of sexual assault survivors who are affiliated with the military.
- Knowledge about military systems, protocols, and culture to improve services to sexual assault survivors who are affiliated with the military.
- A thorough understanding of on-base resources including SARCs, SAPR VAs, and SVCs/VLCs, Chaplains, as well as other responders.
- Adapting service delivery to support callers from military installations throughout the United States, as well as those overseas and those on deployment.

Safe Helpline Services

Safe Helpline has a number of anonymous services to help support sexual assault survivors directly, as well as to assist SVCs/VLCs and other service providers working with survivors.



Telephone Helpline

Speak directly with a Safe Helpline staff member over the phone, 24/7, for confidential support, information, and resources by calling 877-995-5247.



Online Helpline

Access one-on-one, anonymous, and secure support with a staff member through Safe Helpline's online chat portal at www.safehelpline.org/online.



Safe HelpRoom

Connect with and support other survivors of sexual assault through Safe Helpline's anonymous group chat service, in a moderated, secure online environment 24/7 at <http://www.safehelproom.org/>. Sessions just for men are also available every Sunday from 1300-1500 ET.



Self-Paced Educational Programs

Learn more about issues related to sexual assault, the services Safe Helpline offers, and how to support a friend or loved one with Safe Helpline's guided educational programs. All programs can be completed anonymously, and approved courses are available for D-SAACP credit.

www.safehelpline.org/education



Responders Near Me

Find information about military and civilian responders and resources near you with the Safe Helpline Responder Database, anytime, anywhere through the [website](#), via text, and on the Safe Helpline app using your zip code or installation name.



Safe Helpline App

Create a personalized self-care plan and access self-care exercises as well as the other Safe Helpline services with an easy-to-use mobile app. Download the app for free on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Vicarious Trauma

What is Vicarious Trauma?

Vicarious trauma, also known as compassion fatigue, is the impact on the well-being of a service provider due to the continued exposure to a victim or victims' traumatic experiences.

It is common for service providers who work with survivors of sexual violence to experience vicarious trauma.¹

Vicarious trauma presents itself in a variety of ways that are similar to the common physical and emotional effects after sexual assault. Service providers experiencing compassion fatigue often report nightmares, difficulty sleeping, and feeling angry, irritable, and/or disinterested in things they used to enjoy. These effects can have a direct impact on the work you do. If you are experiencing vicarious trauma, you may feel trapped in your work or attempt to avoid discussing your clients' experiences with them.²

It is important differentiate between vicarious trauma with “burnout”. Burnout happens gradually and builds up over time. Time away from work or new job responsibilities can improve feelings of burnout. Vicarious trauma, however, is a stressful or traumatic state due to the preoccupation with stories or trauma experienced by clients.³

As service providers, you know that sexual violence can have profound psychological, emotional, and physical effects on survivors. It's important to acknowledge that sexual violence is complex, and it impacts all of us in different ways, including family members, friends, and service providers.

Although you may not experience trauma directly in your life, because of your close contact with survivors and their stories in your work, you may feel some of the same emotions as your clients. For service providers who are themselves survivors of sexual assault, vicarious trauma may be even more of a significant concern. You may experience flashbacks or thoughts about your own trauma when working with survivors. Experiencing fatigue or vicarious trauma throughout your work is common, and you don't have to work through it alone. Safe Helpline is here to support you as well as your clients today and every day.

¹“What Is Vicarious Trauma?” Office for Victims of Crime, ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma.

²Vicarious Trauma. American Counseling Association. www.counseling.org/docs/trauma-disaster/fact-sheet-9---vicarious-trauma.pdf.

³ibid.

Vicarious Trauma

How Can Safe Helpline Help?

If you are experiencing vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, there are a number of resources that can provide assistance, such as mental health and counseling services. If you are experiencing a crisis or looking for additional support, you are welcome to connect with Safe Helpline staff.

Our [Telephone](#) and [Online Helplines](#) are available 24/7 as an anonymous, secure, and confidential resource for members of the DoD community, including service providers. Our trauma-informed staff are always here to help support you and your clients.

You may also benefit from searching our [Responders Near Me](#) database to find resources for support, both on base and in your community.

If you are looking for support on the go, our [Safe Helpline Mobile App](#), available for free on the App Store and Google Play, offers crisis support and self-care resources anytime, anywhere.

Safe Helpline thanks you for the hard work you put in to support survivors in the DoD community. Experiencing vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue in your work as a service provider is common and you deserve support. We are here to support you, today and every day.

To learn more about vicarious trauma, please explore the resources below:

- [Office of Victims of Crime, What is Vicarious Trauma](#)
- [American Counseling Association, Vicarious Trauma](#)
- [Vicarious Trauma and Resilience](#)

Relevant Resources

There are a number of useful Safe Helpline resources that can help support you, expand your understanding of Safe Helpline, and that you can leverage in your work with clients.

Telephone and Online Helplines

Our [Telephone](#) and [Online Helplines](#) are available 24/7 as an anonymous, secure, and confidential resource for members of the DoD community, including service providers. Our trauma-informed staff are always here to help support you and your clients.

Responders Near Me

Safe Helpline's Responders Near Me database is an easy way to locate service providers on base and in the surrounding area. SVCs and VLCs can use the database to connect clients to other resources or service providers. If a client you are working with is in need of services from the SARC, Chaplain, or others responders, search your base/installation name or zip code in the Responders Near Me database to find contact information for the intended responder. The database also contains information for civilian sexual assault service providers in your area.

Access the Responders Near Me database via SafeHelpline.org/nearme or on the Safe Helpline app. Safe Helpline's website meets or exceeds DoD's security protocols and can be accessed through government computers, so it can be accessed and discussed while meeting with clients.

Safe Helpline App

Connect with Safe Helpline resources and services wherever, whenever with the Safe Helpline App. The Safe Helpline app is available for free on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

The Safe Helpline app's self-care exercises, including a digital coloring book and journal prompts, may be helpful for your clients during stressful times. For example, if a client is waiting to go to court-martial and needs five or ten minutes of a mindless, relaxing activity, you may want to refer them to explore the Safe Helpline app.

Additionally, the Safe Helpline mobile app is a useful tool for SVCs/VLCs on-the-go to:

- Find support for vicarious trauma or burnout with our Telephone and Online Helplines.
- Practice self-care.
- Recommend Safe Helpline resources to clients.

Relevant Resources

Self-Paced Educational Programs

Safe Helpline offers unique, online educational resources for survivors, loved ones, and service providers, including SVCs/VLCs, SARCs, and civilian service providers looking for more information regarding sexual assault.

Programs helpful for SVCs/VLCs:

- **Safe Helpline 101:** This module provides an overview of Safe Helpline, including services offered, information about the secure technology platform, and steps taken to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of users. Most importantly, this module describes how Safe Helpline services augment and support responders, including SVCs/VLCs in their efforts to meet the needs of sexual assault survivors.
- **How to Support a Survivor:** This module provides concrete tools that can help service providers, friends, family members, and colleagues of survivors of sexual assault support the course of a survivor's recovery. This module identifies helping behaviors that support survivors of sexual assault while also educating supporters about behaviors that can be harmful and how to avoid them. This course may help build a toolbox of best practices for supporting the survivors you work with.

Programs helpful for survivors:

- **Building Hope and Resiliency:** This module seeks to help survivors begin to recover, heal, and build resiliency after a sexual assault. Recognizing the effect that trauma can have, this module is part of a comprehensive effort to enhance resiliency and improve readiness across the Total Force. Users will learn about sexual assault and its effects, assess their current coping skills and find information about additional support and resources available. This module may be especially helpful for survivors that are not yet ready to connect directly with anyone or for those that prefer to do their own research before taking the next step. You may want to consider referring a survivor you are working with to this program to support their healing process, particularly if they have not connected to other support services.

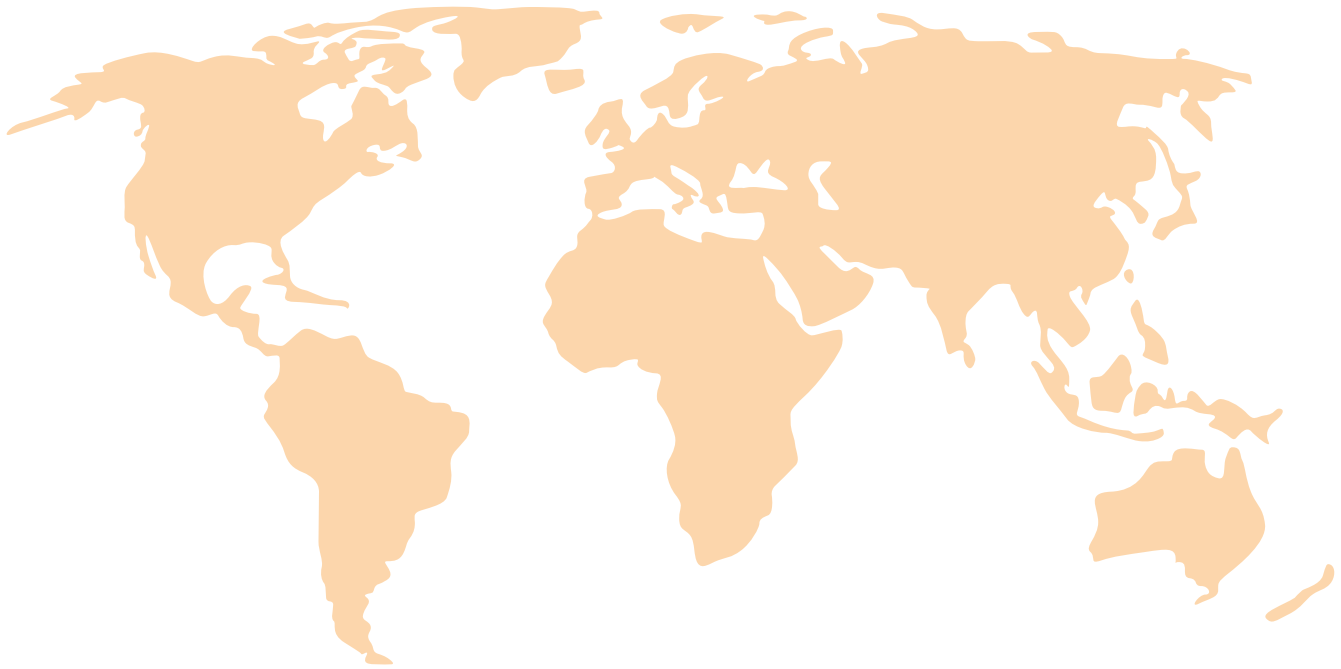
Learn more about Safe Helpline's Self-Paced Educational Programs at SafeHelpline.org/education.

Highlight & Share

Safe Helpline

The following outreach content and ideas have all been approved for use by DoD SAPRO. However, please ensure that you also receive any necessary approvals from your Service and base leadership prior to posting or using the following materials.

Highlight Resources



Safe Helpline Email Signature

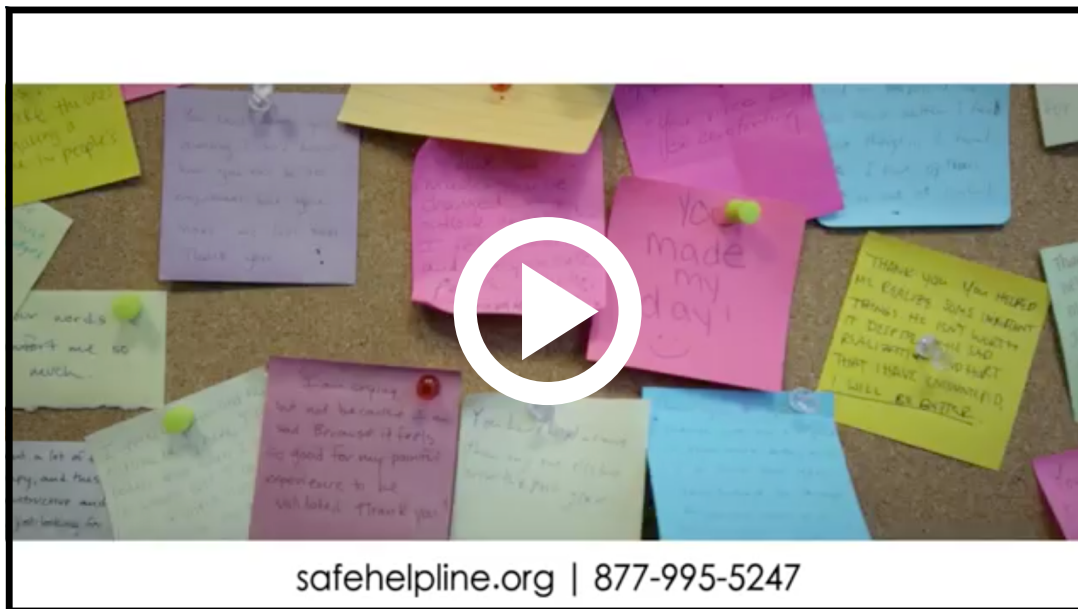
SVCs/VLCs and other stakeholders are encouraged to incorporate Safe Helpline into their email signature to help spread awareness of Safe Helpline with those you work with. Please consider using the following text:

- Safe Helpline offers free, anonymous support to survivors of sexual assault in the DoD community, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Learn more at SafeHelpline.org.
- No matter where you are, Safe Helpline can connect you to the resources you deserve after experiencing an assault. Call 877-995-5247 or visit SafeHelpline.org.
- Need to talk? Survivors of sexual assault in the DoD community can access specialized support at SafeHelpline.org or by calling 877-995-5247.

Promotional Materials

Share the Safe Helpline Video

The Safe Helpline PSA interviews Safe Helpline staff about the services available and the support that visitors to Safe Helpline can expect. Interviews with Safe Helpline staff members help survivors better understand who is on the other end of the line. The video showcases the anonymous and confidential support offered by Safe Helpline, as well as the personalized approach staff members take in helping survivors.



SVCs/VLCs can share the Safe Helpline PSA video on social media, play it for clients, or post it on their office website. The video is available in two lengths on YouTube. To receive a copy of the videos, please email outreach@safehelpline.org.

30-second video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-VJnBXJegk&feature=youtu.be>

60-second video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HQ_vLvAO4&feature=youtu.be

Promotional Materials

Safe Helpline Briefing

The Safe Helpline can provide webinars to your stakeholders to share information about Safe Helpline. Our webinars highlight:

- Ways Safe Helpline staff support survivors, friends and family members of survivors, and responders.
- How Safe Helpline ensures services are anonymous and confidential, and what that means for survivors utilizing the services.
- Videos and demonstrations on tools Safe Helpline has created to ensure survivors have a number of ways to access support.
- How Safe Helpline services integrate and work with existing SAPR/SHARP services.

To request a briefing, contact us at outreach@safehelpline.org. You can download the PowerPoint presentation here: <http://shop.safehelpline.org/store/p/39-Safe-Helpline-PowerPoint-Presentation.aspx>.

Download Web Banners

Many Service members bookmark the base/installation website homepage to find general information on events or available resources. By including Safe Helpline on your homepage, it makes it easier for a Service member to access sexual assault support through Safe Helpline. You can download a variety of web banners here: <http://shop.safehelpline.org/webbanners>.

Posting Ideas:

- Download an image and work with the base/installation IT department to make Safe Helpline information the screen saver or wallpaper for public computers on base.
- Work with the base/installation IT department to embed the image and Safe Helpline link directly into your website.



safehelpline.org       877-995-5247

Promotional Materials

Safe Helpline has free outreach materials available for download and to order at [Shop.SafeHelpline.org](https://shop.safehelpline.org). Materials available include brochures, coffee sleeves with survivor quotes, and dry-erase magnets. Safe Helpline can also ship materials to bases and installations worldwide at no cost.

Some ways to use the Safe Helpline outreach materials include:

- Making the the items available in your office.
- Sharing Safe Helpline promotional materials with your clients. Consider giving clients a Safe Helpline postcard or keycard when you first meet with them.
- Displaying posters or other items outside your office.

Items include:

- Brochures
- Posters
- One-Pagers
- Keycards
- Coffee Sleeves
- And More!



safehelpline.org       877-995-5247

Thank You

Thank you for including Safe Helpline as part of your sexual assault prevention and response efforts in your work as a legal professional!

If you have any questions about Safe Helpline, please feel free to reach out to the communications office at outreach@safehelpline.org.

Before you go... take a look at the SVC/VLC one-pager below. Feel free to print this page or download a digital version to share with other legal professionals. If you have any questions about the one-pager, please reach out to the communications office at outreach@safehelpline.org.

How Safe Helpline Can Support Your Work as an SVC/VLC

The Department of Defense (DoD) Safe Helpline is the Department's sole secure, confidential, and anonymous crisis support service specially designed for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault.

SVCs/VLCs can leverage Safe Helpline resources by:

- ✓ Referring survivors to crisis-intervention support services via **Safe Helpline's Telephone and Online Helplines**.
- ✓ Connecting clients to other resources or service providers on base by searching Safe Helpline's **Responders Near Me** database.
- ✓ Completing **Self-Paced Educational Programs** to learn more about supporting the survivors you work with.
- ✓ Exploring Safe Helpline's free promotional materials and toolkits on the **Safe Helpline Store**.
- ✓ Practicing self-care on the **Safe Helpline App**.

Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma, also known as "compassion fatigue," is the impact on the well-being of a service provider due to the continued exposure to clients' traumatic experiences. Common effects include:

- Anger and irritability
- Difficulty sleeping
- Constantly thinking about/dreaming about their clients' trauma
- Feeling trapped by your work
- Intrusive thoughts
- Difficulty feeling happy about things you used to enjoy

If you or someone you know is experiencing vicarious trauma, you can find mental healthcare providers via the Responders Near Me database.

Testimonials

"I am glad to have Safe Helpline as a resource for my clients. Secure and confidential support is very important to the survivors I work with, and Safe Helpline staff provide support to my clients in crisis."
-SVC/VLC

"Speaking to Safe Helpline has lifted a huge weight off my chest. It's a small step, but it means the world to me."
- Survivor

877-995-5247 | SafeHelpline.org

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