



May 2022

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

The Army Should Take Steps to Enhance Program Oversight, Evaluate Effectiveness, and Identify Reporting Barriers

Accessible Version

GAO Highlight

Highlights of [GAO-22-104673](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Reports of sexual harassment and assault in the Army continue to rise. Soldiers reported about 1,000 and 2,500 incidents occurring during military service, respectively, in fiscal year 2020. According to DOD survey data, many additional incidents go unreported. While the Army has taken steps to respond to such incidents through its SHARP Program, a November 2020 independent review of the command climate at Fort Hood found structural flaws in the program Army-wide. The review also found a pervasive lack of confidence in it among soldiers at that installation.

GAO was asked to review the Army's administration of the SHARP program. This report examines, among other things, the extent to which the Army has (1) implemented policies and programs to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault; and (2) mechanisms in place to oversee the SHARP program and determine its effectiveness. GAO reviewed policies and guidance; conducted a generalizable survey of SHARP personnel; interviewed DOD and Army officials; and interviewed officials and commanders at three Army installations selected based on risk level, among other factors.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making nine recommendations, including that the Army expedite and establish a timeline for the issuance of a consolidated SHARP regulation, design its oversight structure to address identified challenges, develop a suite of performance measures, and develop and implement a continuous evaluation plan. The Army concurred with these recommendations.

View [GAO-22-104673](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

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The Army Should Take Steps to Enhance Program Oversight, Evaluate Effectiveness, and Identify Reporting Barriers

What GAO Found

The Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program has policies to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault. Program implementation, however, is hindered by disjointed policy, among other things. Key provisions related to the SHARP program are spread across multiple Army guidance documents, creating confusion for SHARP personnel. Long-standing efforts to consolidate SHARP policy into a single regulation have been delayed due to competing priorities, according to SHARP program officials. Without expediting and establishing a timeline for the issuance of a consolidated SHARP regulation, the Army risks continued confusion among program personnel.

Several factors limit the Army's oversight of command SHARP programs. A 2019 reorganization decreased SHARP Program Office staff by half, eliminating dedicated key positions and limiting the office's ability to conduct oversight functions. Further, the office lacks visibility over program funding and staffing. Without designing an oversight structure that addresses these challenges, the Army may continue to face difficulties with program implementation.

In addition, two issues limit the Army's ability to gauge program effectiveness. First, GAO found that none of the SHARP program's performance measures fully exhibit key attributes of successful performance measures (see figure). SHARP personnel identified the number of reported incidents as a key measure, but it is neither clear nor objective. An increase in reports may indicate either increased trust in the program or an increase in incidents, indicating a lack of effectiveness. Without developing a suite of performance measures, the Army is unable to measure progress towards achieving its goals. Second, the Army has not systematically evaluated the SHARP program for effectiveness, despite prioritizing such an effort since its inception in 2009. Without developing and implementing a continuous evaluation plan to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program, the Army may miss opportunities to prioritize promising approaches and address challenges.

Comparison of Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program Performance Measures to GAO's Key Attributes of Successful Measures

Measures		Reports of sexual harassment and assault	Estimated prevalence	Ratio of reports to estimated prevalence
Attributes for individual measures	Linkage	○	◐	○
	Baseline and trend	●	◐	◐
	Measurable target	○	○	◐
	Clarity	○	◐	○
	Objectivity	○	●	●
	Reliability	◐	◐	◐
Attributes for an overall suite of measures	Limited overlap	◐	◐	◐
	Core program activities	◐	◐	◐
	Government-wide priorities	○	○	○
	Balance	○	○	○

● Attributes exhibited ◐ Attributes partially exhibited ○ Attributes not exhibited

Source: GAO analysis of Army information. | GAO-22-104673

Accessible Data Table for Highlight Figure

Measures	Reports of sexual harassment and assault	Estimated prevalence	Ratio of reports to estimated prevalence
Attributes for individual measures	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes not exhibited
	Attributes exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes not exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes exhibited	Attributes exhibited
	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
Attributes for an overall suite of measures	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited

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Abbreviations

ARD	Army Resilience Directorate
DOD	Department of Defense
DSAID	Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database
D-SAACP	DOD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program
ODEI	Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
PM	Program Manager
SAPR	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response
SAPRO	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office
SARC	Sexual Assault Response Coordinator
SHARP	Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention
VA	Victim Advocate

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May 27, 2022

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
United States Senate

For nearly 2 decades, incidents of sexual harassment and assault in the military have generated congressional and media attention.¹ In line with efforts across the Department of Defense (DOD), the Army has taken steps to respond to such incidents through its Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program.² However, even with concerted efforts to prevent sexual harassment and assault, reports of both continue to rise. Specifically, over the past 5 fiscal years, reports of sexual harassment in the Army increased from 511 in fiscal year 2016, to 977 in fiscal year 2020.³ Similarly, servicemember reports of sexual assault increased from 1,248 in fiscal year 2007, the first fiscal year for

¹DOD defines sexual harassment as conduct that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and deliberate or repeated offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature when other conditions are met. DOD defines sexual assault as intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault includes a broad category of sexual offenses, consisting of the following specific Uniform Code of Military Justice offenses: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy (forced oral or anal sex), or attempts to commit these acts. We use the term “sexual harassment and assault” throughout this report to refer to sexual harassment and sexual assault. Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction 1020.03, *Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces* (Feb. 8, 2018) (incorporating change 1, effective Dec. 29, 2020); Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program* (Jan. 23, 2012) (incorporating change 5, Nov. 10, 2021).

²According to the Army, the intent of the SHARP program is to enhance Army readiness by fostering a culture free of sexual harassment and assault through prevention, education and training, response, victim support, and reporting procedures, among other things.

³According to SHARP Program Office officials, the Army received an additional 255 complaints of sexual harassment in fiscal year 2020, but could not include them in the total due to incomplete data.

which data are available, to 2,532 incidents occurring during military service in fiscal year 2020.⁴

While the Army reported in 2021 that increased reports may be a result of efforts to encourage reporting, DOD survey data indicate that many incidents may continue to go unreported. DOD's most recent survey of active duty servicemembers estimated that in the Army, 24.3 percent of women and 6 percent of men (approximately 40,000 servicemembers combined) were sexually harassed in the 12 months prior to the survey, and 5.8 percent of women and 0.7 percent of men (approximately 6,700 servicemembers combined) were sexually assaulted in the same time period.⁵

To better inform Congressional oversight of the Army SHARP program, you requested we review the Army's administration of this program. This report assesses the extent to which the Army has (1) implemented policies and programs to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault; (2) mechanisms in place to oversee the SHARP program and determine its effectiveness; and (3) identified and addressed barriers to sexual harassment and assault reporting.

For our first objective, we reviewed relevant DOD and Army policies on sexual harassment and assault prevention and response, and assessed the extent to which Army policy in this area aligns with DOD policy. To identify how the Army manages and oversees command SHARP programs, we administered and analyzed the results of a web-based survey using a stratified random sample of current and recent Army SHARP personnel who received initial or renewed certification to hold an Army SHARP position between May 2019 and February 2021. Our survey

⁴U.S. Army, *Fiscal Year 2020 Active Component and U.S. Army Reserve Annual Report on Sexual Assault* (May 6, 2021).

⁵Margins of error range from $\pm 0.1\%$ to $\pm 2.7\%$ for sexual harassment and from $\pm 0.2\%$ to $\pm 1.3\%$ for sexual assault. The report provided the estimated percentage of active-duty servicemembers in the Army that experienced sexual harassment and assault. We calculated the approximate estimated number of active-duty servicemembers based on DOD documentation that there were 393,600 male active-duty servicemembers and 68,500 female active-duty servicemembers in the Army at the time the fiscal year 2018 survey was conducted. Department of Defense, Office of People Analytics (DOD), *2018 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Active Duty Military: Results and Trends* (May 2019). The fiscal year 2020 survey was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A fiscal year 2021 survey was administered beginning in December 2021 and the results are still pending as of March 2022.

had a weighted response rate of 31 percent.⁶ We selected this timeframe because certification must be renewed every 2 years to avoid expiration, and DOD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP) certifications are updated on a quarterly basis.

To identify the population of current and recent Army SHARP personnel, we obtained data from DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) on Army personnel who held an active certification through the D-SAACP. To assess the reliability of the D-SAACP data, we reviewed related DOD documentation, including the methodology for a DOD survey conducted using the data, and interviewed knowledgeable officials. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable to use as a population frame for a statistical sample of current and recent Army SHARP personnel who received or renewed certification within the designated timeframe. In addition, we interviewed relevant DOD and Army officials, as well as brigade and battalion commanders, senior enlisted leaders, and other Army officials at a nongeneralizable sample of three Army installations. We selected installations that were at high risk of sexual harassment or assault for both men and women, as determined by a 2018 DOD report.⁷ We also considered factors such as the population of active duty Army servicemembers, primary mission, and geographic location when selecting installations.

We determined that the information and communication components of internal control were relevant to this objective.⁸ Specifically, we identified the underlying principles that management should use quality information

⁶All SHARP personnel, including Program Managers, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, and Victim Advocates, must be certified through the DOD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program, and certifications are valid for 2 years from the certification date. Certifications remain in the database until they expire or are renewed. We used certification data to identify the population and select the sample for our survey. The overall unweighted response rate for our survey of current and former SHARP personnel was 41 percent. However, the response rate varied across the strata of our survey design, necessitating the use of a weighted survey response rate, which was 31 percent. All survey results presented in the body of this report are generalizable to the population of Army SHARP personnel, except where otherwise noted. See appendix I for survey questions and results.

⁷DOD, *2018 Contextual Risk Factors Associated with Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in Active Duty: Overview Report*. We conducted virtual visits to Fort Campbell, KY, Fort Jackson, SC, and US Army Garrison Yongson-Casey, Republic of Korea.

⁸GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2014).

and internally communicate that information to achieve objectives as relevant to this objective. We assessed the results of our review of the Army's relevant policies and procedures and our interviews with installation and headquarters-level officials to determine whether the Army met these principles. We also compared information from our analysis of policy, survey results, and interviews to DOD and Army guidance to assess the extent to which the Army's efforts to implement sexual harassment and assault policy are aligned with relevant guidance.⁹

For our second objective, we reviewed relevant DOD and Army policies and reports to identify the extent to which the Army evaluates the effectiveness of the SHARP program, including existing performance measures. We also analyzed results from our generalizable survey of current and former SHARP personnel, as described previously. In addition, we reviewed data on reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault provided by the Army annually to the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) and SAPRO for fiscal years 2016 through 2020. We selected these years to capture recent trends over 5 years, and fiscal year 2020 was the most recent year for which complete data were available at the time of our review. To assess the reliability of these data, we reviewed reports of such data submitted by the Army to ODEI and SAPRO, along with relevant documentation, and interviewed knowledgeable Army and DOD officials. We determined that these data were reliable for the purposes of discussing the number of sexual harassment complaints and sexual assault reports recorded by the Army for the fiscal years in question. In addition, we interviewed relevant DOD and Army officials at the headquarters level and at our nongeneralizable sample of installations, including SHARP personnel and Army commanders.

We determined that the monitoring, control environment, and information and communication components of internal control were relevant to this objective.¹⁰ Specifically, we identified the underlying principles that management should establish and operate monitoring activities and evaluate results; recruit, develop, and retain competent personnel; and use quality information to achieve objectives as relevant to this objective.

⁹DOD Directive 6495.01; Department of Defense Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Program Procedures* (Mar. 28, 2013) (incorporating change 6, Nov. 10, 2021); DOD Instruction 1020.03; and, Army Regulation 600-20, *Army Command Policy* (July 24, 2020).

¹⁰[GAO-14-704G](#).

We assessed the Army's policies and procedures for oversight and evaluation of the SHARP program and information from our survey and interviews with headquarters and installation officials to determine whether the Army met these principles. In addition, we assessed Army SHARP performance measures that we identified to determine the extent to which they exhibit key attributes of effective performance measures identified by our prior work— such as clarity, objectivity, and baseline data.¹¹ We also compared information from our review of policy, Army data, interviews, and survey results to related Army and DOD guidance to assess the extent to which the Army's efforts to oversee and determine the effectiveness of the SHARP program are aligned with current guidance.¹²

For our third objective, we reviewed relevant DOD and Army policies and reports. We also reviewed results from DOD's biannual survey of *Workplace and Gender Relations in the Active Duty Military* for fiscal years 2016 and 2018, the most recent years in which the survey was conducted.¹³ To identify barriers to sexual harassment and assault reporting, we analyzed results from our generalizable survey of current and recent SHARP personnel, as described previously, and spoke with Army SHARP personnel and other Army officials at our nongeneralizable

¹¹Our prior work emphasizes key attributes of performance measures, such as clarity and objectivity. See GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Further Refine Its Tax Filing Season Performance Measures*, [GAO-03-143](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 22, 2002), p. 45, for a description of how we developed the attributes of effective performance goals and measures and *Defense Health Care Reform: Additional Implementation Details Would Increase Transparency of DOD's Plans and Enhance Accountability*, [GAO-14-49](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 6, 2013), p. 17 for a description of why the baseline measure was added as an attribute of effective performance measures. See also *GPRA Performance Reports*, [GAO/GGD-96-66R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 14, 1996); *Military Personnel: DOD Needs to Establish Performance Measures for the Armed Forces Sports Program*, [GAO-17-542](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jun. 8, 2017); *Sexual Assault: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Prevention Strategy and to Help Ensure It Is Effectively Implemented*, [GAO-16-61](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 4, 2015); *Missile Defense: Opportunity to Refocus on Strengthening Acquisition Management*, [GAO-13-432](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2013); and *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships*, [GAO-11-646SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2011).

¹²DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1; DOD Directive 6495.01; Army Regulation 600-20; and Department of Defense, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023: The Department's renewed strategic approach to prevent sexual assault* (April 2019) (hereinafter cited as DOD, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023*).

¹³DOD, *2018 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Active Duty Military: Results and Trends*; and Department of Defense, *2016 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Military Members: Overview Report* (May 2017).

sample of installations. In addition, we conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with a nongeneralizable sample of five Army servicemembers who responded to an announcement distributed at selected installations inviting interested servicemembers to share their experiences with the SHARP program. We also interviewed relevant DOD and Army officials at the headquarters and installation levels, as well as selected brigade and battalion commanders and senior enlisted leaders. We compared the information from our analysis of DOD policy, surveys, and interviews to DOD and Army guidance on sexual harassment and assault prevention and response to assess the extent to which the Army's efforts to identify and address reporting barriers are aligned with current guidance.¹⁴ We describe our scope and methodology in further detail in appendix II.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2021 to May 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

DOD Definitions, Roles, and Responsibilities for Sexual Harassment and Assault

DOD defines **sexual harassment** as conduct that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and deliberate or repeated offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person's job, pay, or career; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or

¹⁴Department of Defense Instruction 6400.09, *DOD Policy on Integrated Primary Prevention of Self-Directed Harm and Prohibited Abuse or Harm* (Sept. 11, 2020); Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Harassment Prevention Strategy for the Armed Forces Fiscal Years 2021-2026* (May 2021); and DOD, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023*.

creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Such conduct constitutes sexual harassment when it is so severe or pervasive that a reasonable person would perceive, and the victim does perceive, the environment as hostile or offensive.¹⁵

DOD defines **sexual assault** as intentional sexual contact, characterized by use of force, threats, intimidation, abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent. The term includes a broad category of sexual offenses consisting of the following specific Uniform Code of Military Justice offenses: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy (forced oral or anal sex), or attempts to commit these acts.¹⁶

Various officials and organizations within DOD have responsibilities related to preventing and responding to sexual harassment and assault in the military.

- The **Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness** is responsible for developing the overall policy and guidance for the department's efforts to prevent and respond to instances of sexual harassment, among other forms of harassment, and sexual assault.¹⁷ The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness oversees the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office.
- The **Director, Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI)** is responsible for developing DOD harassment prevention and response policy and managing the implementation of the department's harassment prevention and response program, including sexual harassment.¹⁸ Among other things, ODEI is also responsible for

¹⁵DOD Instruction 1020.03.

¹⁶DOD Directive 6495.01.

¹⁷DOD Directive 6495.01 and DOD Instruction 1020.03.

¹⁸DOD defines harassment as behavior that is unwelcome or offensive to a reasonable person, whether oral, written, or physical, that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. DOD considers bullying, discriminatory harassment—based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), gender-identity or sexual orientation—and hazing to be forms of harassment. DOD Instruction 1020.03.

conducting compliance reviews of the military services' harassment prevention and response policies and programs.¹⁹

- The **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO)** serves as the department's single point of authority, accountability, and oversight for its sexual assault prevention and response program. Among other things, SAPRO is responsible for implementing and monitoring compliance with DOD sexual assault policy and providing the DOD components, including the military departments, with technical assistance in addressing matters concerning sexual assault prevention and response.²⁰

The Secretaries of the military departments are responsible for establishing policies and procedures for preventing and responding to sexual harassment and assault within their respective military departments that are consistent with DOD policy.²¹ The Army is unique among the military services in combining its efforts to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment as well as sexual assault into a single program. The SHARP program implements DOD and Army policy regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault, and enhances Army readiness by fostering a culture free of sexual harassment and assault through prevention, training, response capability, and victim support, among other things.²²

Various officials and organizations within the Army have responsibilities related to the SHARP program.

- The Director, **Army Resilience Directorate (ARD)** is responsible for Army-wide policies, overall implementation, evaluation, and assessment of the SHARP program, among other things.
- The **SHARP Program Office** within ARD directs the Army's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and assault. It is responsible for integrating SHARP policy and ensuring effective communication with stakeholders within and outside the Army.

¹⁹DOD Instruction 1020.03.

²⁰DOD Directive 6495.01.

²¹DOD Directive 6495.01 and DOD Instruction 1020.03.

²²Army Regulation 600-20.

- Per Army guidance, **commanders** are the “center of gravity” of the SHARP program. Commanders, supervisors, and managers at all levels are responsible for the effective implementation of SHARP policy and execution of the SHARP program within their organizations.²³

The following SHARP personnel have responsibilities for implementing the SHARP program and providing support services to eligible victims of sexual harassment or assault, including servicemembers, their adult dependents, and some DOD civilian employees and contractors.²⁴

- **Program Managers** are responsible for oversight and coordination of the SHARP program in their organization and serve as the principal advisor to the commander for all matters related to implementation of the SHARP program.
- **Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs)** serve as the point of contact for the coordination of appropriate and responsive care for eligible sexual harassment and sexual assault victims. Among other things, SARCs ensure that victim services are in place to provide information and emotional support to victims during administrative, medical, investigative, and legal procedures. SARCs also track services provided to a victim from initial report through resolution of the case or until the victim no longer wishes to receive SHARP services. SARCs have access to the senior commander for matters concerning sexual harassment or assault.
- **Victim Advocates (VAs)** provide advocacy services to victims of sexual assault and complainants and victims of sexual harassment. VAs advise victims about reporting options and available services. They also provide non-clinical crisis intervention, referrals, and ongoing emotional support to sexual harassment and assault victims, among other things.

²³Army Regulation 600-20.

²⁴SHARP personnel roles and responsibilities are outlined in Army Regulation 600-20. In addition to Program Managers, SARCs, and VAs, other SHARP personnel include victim representatives, civilian employees of the Army who volunteer for and are appointed to perform collateral duty VA responsibilities, and training instructors, who are responsible for training SHARP professionals and supporting other SHARP training as required, among other things.

Sexual Harassment and Assault Reporting Options

Sexual Harassment

The Army provides three complaint options—informal, formal, and anonymous—for servicemembers filing a complaint of sexual harassment.

- An **informal complaint** is a complaint of sexual harassment, either written or oral, which is not submitted as a formal complaint, and is typically resolved through discussion, problem identification, and clarification of issues, such as through the use of a mediator. These complaints may be voiced to the offending party, to someone in a position of authority, or both, with the intention that the offending behavior will cease with no further action required. SARCs who receive or discuss informal resolution of sexual harassment complaints are to maintain a memorandum for record detailing the complaint and the response to the complaint.
- Servicemembers may file a **formal complaint** of sexual harassment using Department of the Army Form 7746, documenting the nature of the complaint and the requested remedies. All formal complaints are referred to the brigade commander, who is to initiate an investigation subject to regulatory timeline requirements. In May 2021, the Army issued guidance directing that commanders appoint investigating officers from outside the alleged offender's assigned brigade or equivalent unit to conduct sexual harassment complaint investigations.²⁵
- An **anonymous complaint** is a complaint of sexual harassment, submitted by any means, from an unidentified source. Actions taken in response to an anonymous complaint depend on the extent of the information provided. If the complaint contains sufficient information, the commanding officer or supervisor must initiate an investigation. All anonymous complaints, including those that cannot be investigated, are to be referred to the alleged offender's brigade commander for evaluation and tracked in the Integrated Case Reporting System, the Army's database for tracking sexual harassment complaints.

²⁵Army Directive 2021-16, *Immediate Actions to Improve the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program* (May 5, 2021).

Sexual Assault

Servicemembers who are sexually assaulted have two reporting options—restricted and unrestricted reporting.

- **Restricted reporting** allows victims to confidentially disclose a sexual assault to specified individuals (e.g., SARC, VA, or health care provider) and receive support services such as healthcare, counseling, and other support without triggering an investigation.²⁶
- **Unrestricted reporting** allows a victim to access support services and triggers an investigation by law enforcement and command notification of the allegation. Victims who make an unrestricted report of sexual assault are also eligible for consideration for protection orders and expedited transfers, which are not available to victims filing restricted reports. A restricted report can be converted to an unrestricted report at a later date if the victim chooses, but an unrestricted report cannot be converted to a restricted report.²⁷

Reviews and Recommendations Related to DOD's Sexual Harassment and Assault Efforts

Prior GAO Reviews and Recommendations

Since 2008, we have conducted a range of work on the issues of sexual harassment and assault in the military. Specifically, we have issued numerous reports on the range of unwanted sexual behaviors in the military, the majority of which were focused on sexual harassment or assault specifically.²⁸ Across these reports, we have made a total of 106

²⁶DOD's guidance states that victims are eligible to make a restricted report of sexual assault, as long as the victim has not personally reported the incident to law enforcement or previously filed an unrestricted report for the same incident. The victim's election to make a restricted report does not preclude the command or military law enforcement from conducting an investigation of the incident, but information provided by the victim in a restricted report will not be disclosed to military law enforcement or the command. DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1. The Army issued guidance to implement this requirement in May 2022. Department of the Army Memorandum, *Expanded Eligibility to Elect the Option of a Restricted Report on a DD Form 2910 and Process for Victims to Decline to Participate in Investigations* (May 2022).

²⁷Army Regulation 600-20.

²⁸A listing of these reports, among others, is included in the *Related GAO Products* page at the end of this report.

recommendations to address sexual harassment and assault, 50 of which have not been implemented.²⁹

In May 2020, we provided the Secretary of Defense with an update on the overall status of DOD's implementation of our recommendations and called attention to areas in which recommendations that have not been fully addressed should be given high priority.³⁰ Two of these priority recommendations, which have not been fully implemented as of March 2022, address the prevention of sexual harassment. Specifically, in September 2011, we recommended, and DOD concurred, that the department: (1) develop a strategy for holding individuals in positions of leadership accountable for promoting, supporting, and enforcing the department's sexual harassment policies and programs; and (2) ensure that ODEI develops and aggressively implements an oversight framework to help guide the department's efforts.³¹ At a minimum, we recommended that such a framework should contain long-term goals, objectives, and milestones; strategies to accomplish goals; criteria for measuring progress; and results-oriented performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the department's sexual harassment policies and programs. Such a framework should also identify and include a plan for ensuring that adequate resources are available to carry out the office's oversight responsibilities.³²

²⁹See appendix III for a list of recommendations we have made to address sexual harassment and assault in the military that have not yet been implemented.

³⁰GAO, *Priority Open Recommendations: Department of Defense*, [GAO-20-446PR](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 4, 2020).

³¹The recommendation specifically referenced the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity which was later renamed the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI). ODEI is currently responsible for implementing this recommendation.

³²GAO, *Preventing Sexual Harassment: DOD Needs Greater Leadership Commitment and an Oversight Framework*, [GAO-11-809](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 21, 2011). Section 539B of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 requires the Secretary of Defense to provide a report to the House and Senate armed services committees on the actions taken to develop and implement a DOD-wide strategy to hold individuals in positions of leadership in the department accountable for the promotion, support, and enforcement of the department's policies and programs on sexual harassment. This provision also requires that the strategy provide for an oversight framework for the department's efforts to promote, support, and enforce policies and programs of the department on sexual harassment. ODEI officials stated in March 2022 that they had drafted the required report and it was undergoing review within the Department but had not yet been released. Pub. L. No. 116-283, §539B (2021).

In May 2021, DOD issued its Harassment Prevention Strategy for the Armed Forces for fiscal years 2021-2026, which is to be used for holding individuals in positions of leadership accountable and as an oversight framework to guide the department's efforts. However, we reported that the strategy did not fully include some key elements necessary for a leadership accountability strategy or for an oversight framework.³³ In December 2021, DOD provided an update in which it noted that the department is revising its strategy to incorporate the elements of our recommendations from 2011, among other things, and expects to complete its work by the end of fiscal year 2022.

Army Fort Hood Independent Review Committee

Following the murder of a soldier at Fort Hood in April 2020, concerns were raised about issues with sexual harassment and assault at the installation, and the Army responded by undertaking an independent review of the command climate and culture at Fort Hood. Specifically, the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (referred to throughout this report as the Fort Hood Committee) was formed to determine whether the climate was conducive to uninhibited reporting of sexual harassment and assault and to assess the effectiveness of the Fort Hood SHARP program, among other things. The Fort Hood Committee issued a report in November 2020 finding that the SHARP program at Fort Hood during the review period was ineffective, to the extent that the command climate was permissive of sexual harassment and assault, and that there was a pervasive lack of confidence in it among soldiers. Further, the report found that the Army SHARP program is structurally flawed, and that incidents of sexual harassment and assault are likely significantly underreported.³⁴ The report included nine findings and 70 recommendations to improve the Army's handling of sexual harassment and assault.

The Army has taken some steps in response to the Fort Hood Committee's recommendations. For example, in May 2021 the Army issued guidance to address selected recommendations of the report,

³³GAO, *Military Hazing: DOD Should Address Data Reporting Deficiencies, Training Limitations, and Personnel Shortfalls*, [GAO-22-104066](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 15, 2021).

³⁴According to the report, the Fort Hood Committee review encompassed fiscal years 2018, 2019, and 2020 and incorporated data and information from previous fiscal years as necessary for context. Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, *Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee* (Nov. 6, 2020).

such as requiring that investigating officers for sexual harassment complaints be appointed from outside the alleged offender's brigade-size unit. The guidance also modified procedures for issuing military protective orders for victims of sexual assault and providing updates to victims about their cases.³⁵ An Army implementation plan released in May 2021 targets fiscal year 2023 for full implementation of all recommendations across the Army.

DOD-Wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military

In February 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum establishing a 90-day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, among other things.³⁶ The Independent Review Commission was to report on and make recommendations to advance efforts to counter military sexual harassment and assault in the areas of accountability, prevention, climate and culture, and victim care and support.³⁷

In reporting its findings, the Independent Review Commission noted common themes that illustrate the current state of sexual harassment and assault in the military. For example, there was a wide gap between what senior leaders believe is happening in their commands and what junior enlisted servicemembers experience, resulting in broken trust between commanders and servicemembers. Further, there were critical deficiencies in the workforce dedicated to sexual assault prevention and response, including inexperience, a reliance on part-time personnel, and a lack of prevention specialists. The Independent Review Commission made more than 80 recommendations as a result of its review. For example, it recommended actions to professionalize, strengthen, and resource the sexual assault prevention and response workforce across the department; improve data collection and reporting on sexual

³⁵Army Directive 2021-16, *Immediate Actions to Improve the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program* (May 5, 2021).

³⁶Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Immediate Actions to Counter Sexual Assault and Harassment and the Establishment of a 90-Day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Feb. 26, 2021).

³⁷Department of Defense, *Charter for 90 Day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Mar. 5, 2021).

harassment and assault; and optimize and expand victim care and support efforts.³⁸

In September 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum directing a tiered approach to implement the Independent Review Commission's recommendations, with adjustments made by the Department to ensure effective implementation.³⁹ In October 2021, DOD issued guidance that laid out the department's strategic plan for implementing all of the Commission's recommendations, with modifications to some of the recommendations to ensure effective implementation. DOD estimates the department will fully implement tier-one recommendations by the end of fiscal year 2027 and fully implement all recommendations by fiscal year 2030.⁴⁰

Implementation of Army SHARP Policies and Programs Is Hindered by Several Issues

While the Army has implemented a number of policies and programs to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault, their implementation is hindered by four primary issues. First, Army SHARP policy is disjointed—that is, key provisions are spread across multiple Army regulations, directives, and memoranda—which has created confusion for commanders and SHARP personnel, and aspects of the policy are unclear. Second, Army policy does not fully align with DOD policy in some areas, such as with regard to sexual assault victims' access to installation commanders. Third, contrary to DOD and Army policy, SARCs have inconsistent access to commanders. Finally, while DOD and the Army have developed resources to assist commanders in implementing their SHARP programs, commanders are not consistently aware of these resources or where to find them.

³⁸Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military* (2021).

³⁹Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Commencing DOD Actions and Implementation to Address Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the Military* (Sept. 22, 2021).

⁴⁰Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Guidance for Implementing Tier 1 Recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Oct. 13, 2021).

Army SHARP Policy Is Disjointed and Aspects Are Unclear to Some Personnel

Policy governing the Army SHARP program is disjointed, with key provisions spread across multiple Army regulations, directives, and memoranda. This requires officials to synthesize relevant information from a continuously growing number of documents to ensure the program is properly implemented. While Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy, is the primary regulation governing the SHARP program, SHARP Program Office officials identified at least 13 additional regulations, directives, and memoranda that also contain provisions related to the administration of the SHARP program.

For example, Army Regulation 600-37 requires a commander to annotate a servicemember's performance-disciplinary folders when the servicemember receives a court-martial conviction, nonjudicial punishment, or punitive administrative action for a sex-related offense.⁴¹ While Army Regulation 600-20 references Army Regulation 600-37, the references are not specific to sex-related offenses. As such, a commander must be aware of both regulations to properly implement this aspect of the SHARP program. However, when we asked SHARP Program Office officials for a list of all relevant SHARP policies, Army Regulation 600-37 was not included in the list of policies even though it contains relevant content. As a result, it is unclear the extent to which commanders and SHARP personnel may be aware of these requirements.

Similarly, Army Regulation 195-5 details, among other things, how physical and forensic evidence is to be retained for both restricted and unrestricted reports of sexual assault.⁴² While this regulation is included in a list of referenced policies in Army Regulation 600-20, the reference is specific to the disposition of evidence collected as part of a forensic medical examination in connection with a restricted report. Army Regulation 600-20 does not reference other relevant provisions from Army Regulation 195-5, such as the retention of the victim's personal property, evidence collected in connection with an unrestricted report, or evidence provided by victims to SARCs, VAs, or chaplains in connection with a restricted report. A senior SHARP program office official noted that

⁴¹Army Regulation 600-37, *Unfavorable Information* (Oct. 2, 2020).

⁴²Army Regulation 195-5, *Criminal Investigation Evidence Procedures* (Aug. 25, 2019).

Army Regulation 195-5 does not align with DOD policy and that SARCs and VAs are not trained in the proper collection of evidence because it is not their role. This official noted that the SHARP program was not involved in the publication of the regulation and is now working with the regulation's proponent to remove those references. Due to the disjointed nature of the Army's sexual harassment and assault policies, it is unclear whether other Army policies may also conflict with SHARP or DOD policies and procedures. Further, SHARP personnel must be aware of procedures in multiple regulations in order to comprehensively understand the Army's procedures for responding to reports of sexual assault.

Army Regulation 600-20 outlines command responsibilities beyond the SHARP program, such as for military discipline and conduct and the Army Military Equal Opportunity program. A senior SHARP Program Office official stated that since the SHARP program office is not the proponent of Army Regulation 600-20, the program office cannot easily make updates to the policy when needed.⁴³ Further, given that SHARP is just one of many programs covered in the regulation and the lengthy process of updating an Army regulation, a senior SHARP Program Office official indicated that it is impractical to make frequent revisions to the policy in line with changes to the SHARP program. Instead, SHARP program policy updates are issued through various memoranda and directives. For example, following the Fort Hood Committee's November 2020 report, the Army issued a directive in May 2021 that detailed immediate actions that would be taken to improve how the SHARP program handles sexual harassment complaint investigations and military protective orders, among other things.⁴⁴ However, this approach to updating policy requires SHARP personnel and commanders to remain abreast of multiple guidance documents to ensure their SHARP programs reflect the most current policy.

SHARP personnel at all three Army installations in our review identified challenges related to SHARP policy. For example, a Program Manager at one installation described SHARP policies as confusing and contradictory and noted that they are constantly trying to clarify what is in the regulations, specifically with regard to how sexual harassment complaints

⁴³The Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-1, Personnel is the proponent and exception authority for Army Regulation 600-20.

⁴⁴Army Directive 2021-16, *Immediate Actions To Improve the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program* (May 5, 2021).

are to be addressed. SHARP personnel at another installation described challenges related to the communication and consolidation of policies. Specifically, these personnel noted that they are awaiting a consolidated SHARP regulation, but that, in the meantime, guidance has been communicated in a piecemeal fashion, which has been challenging.

Respondents to our survey of SHARP personnel also noted this challenge. Specifically, 40 of 158 respondents to an open ended question about oversight of the SHARP program mentioned a lack of clear or consolidated policy as a challenge. For example, some respondents noted that they are awaiting the issuance of a consolidated SHARP regulation to correct issues with Army Regulation 600-20 and that this has created confusion in the meantime. One respondent noted difficulties determining which regulation or directive is the most up-to-date and reflective of current procedures. Another respondent noted that the SHARP office at the individual's location often has to contact headquarters for clarity on regulations versus directives, and that the clarifying guidance provided by e-mail only creates further confusion. Further, a respondent highlighted the need for a "one-stop-shop" regulation because there are too many conflicting regulations, directives, and other guidance documents.

Some SHARP personnel face challenges interpreting, and thus implementing, aspects of the Army's policy for managing sexual harassment complaints. For example, based on responses to our survey, we estimate that about 27 percent of SHARP personnel consider the clarity of the policy for responding to sexual harassment challenging to some degree.⁴⁵ One survey respondent commented that Army Regulation 600-20 contains incorrect information related to sexual harassment reporting and that even though it has been more than a year since its issuance, no additional clarifying guidance has been issued. Another survey respondent commented that there could be greater clarity about how to address sexual harassment complaints at joint installations. Further, a lead SARC at one installation in our review stated that the policy for managing informal sexual harassment complaints is

⁴⁵The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (20.6, 34.1). Respondents were asked to rate challenges using the following scale: very challenging, moderately challenging, slightly challenging, not very challenging, and not at all challenging. This estimate combines responses to the first three categories.

contradictory and confusing.⁴⁶ Specifically, Army Regulation 600-20 requires that if a commander receives or becomes aware of a formal or informal complaint of sexual harassment, the commander must initiate an inquiry or investigation, thus elevating the complaint from informal to formal.⁴⁷ However, the SARC stated that it is unclear whether a complainant should be provided an opportunity to choose whether to elevate their complaint from informal to formal in such a situation.

SHARP Program Office officials also noted that the Army's current method of issuing policy updates and the unclear policy for managing sexual harassment complaints have created confusion for users of the policy. In response, these officials stated that they were working to consolidate the SHARP-related policies that are currently spread across multiple regulations, directives, and memoranda into a single regulation. Officials stated that the consolidated regulation will also clarify procedures for processing informal sexual harassment complaints.

We reported in February 2017 that SHARP Program Office officials stated that they were working to consolidate SHARP guidance into a single regulation to address disjointed policies across multiple guidance documents and establish a designated SHARP regulation. Officials stated at that time that they planned to issue the new regulation in May 2017.⁴⁸ In January 2021, SHARP Program Office officials noted that the consolidated regulation had not yet been issued, but anticipated it would be issued in spring of that year. However, as of October 2021, these officials told us that the new regulation had again been placed on hold pending efforts to address findings and recommendations from the Fort Hood Committee and the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on

⁴⁶An informal sexual harassment complaint is a complaint that a complainant does not wish to file in writing on an Army Form 7746. Typically, these cases are handled informally and resolved through discussion, problem identification, and clarification of the issues. In contrast, all formal complaints are referred to the brigade commander, investigated, and, at the conclusion of the investigation, the complaint is deemed substantiated or not, and any appropriate actions are taken. Lead SARCs are appointed on installations with more than one SARC, and are responsible for supporting the senior commander, tenant commanders, and other SARCs on the installation to ensure integrated and transparent response and quality victim care, among other things.

⁴⁷Army Directive 2021-16 states that commanders who initiate a sexual harassment investigation must appoint an investigating officer from outside of the alleged offender's assigned brigade-sized element.

⁴⁸GAO, *Sexual Assault: Better Resource Management Needed to Improve Prevention and Response in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve*, [GAO-17-217](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2017).

Sexual Assault in the Military. As previously noted, DOD currently estimates that all recommendations stemming from the 2021 Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, with modifications to ensure appropriate implementation, will be fully implemented by fiscal year 2030. An ARD official stated that the Army hopes to issue the consolidated regulation in the summer or fall of 2022, but this timeline is unofficial. A senior SHARP Program Office official stated in March 2022 that the office has not received any direction since issuance was placed on hold. As such, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they do not have a timeline in place for issuing a consolidated SHARP regulation.

Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government states that management should internally communicate the necessary quality information—that is current, complete, accurate, accessible, and timely—to enable personnel to perform key roles in achieving objectives and addressing risks. Information should be communicated internally in such a way as to ensure that it is readily available to its intended audience when needed.⁴⁹

Without expediting and establishing a timeline for the issuance of a SHARP regulation that consolidates the various policies and clarifies procedures for managing sexual harassment complaints, the Army risks continued confusion among program personnel. This could negatively affect the Army's ability to effectively prevent and respond to victims of sexual harassment and assault.

Army SHARP Policy Does Not Align with DOD Policy in Some Areas

While DOD and Army policies on sexual harassment and assault generally align, there are key Army policy provisions that do not align or fully align with DOD policy.⁵⁰ We identified a number of areas in which Army policy did not align or did not fully align with DOD policy, including provisions related to (1) commander response to a report of sexual

⁴⁹[GAO-14-704G](#).

⁵⁰For each policy provision, we determined whether the Army policy was fully aligned (all aspects of the DOD provision were reflected), partially aligned (some, but not all aspects of the DOD provision were reflected), or not aligned (no portion of the DOD provision was reflected in Army policy or the DOD and Army policies conflicted). For additional details on our methodology for this analysis, see appendix II.

assault, (2) victim access to the installation commander, (3) management of sexual assault case documentation, (4) verification of commander compliance with DOD requirements, and (5) SARC access to commanders.

First, DOD policy states that commanders are to use the Commander's 30-Day Checklist for Unrestricted Reports to facilitate victim and alleged offender response.⁵¹ The checklist outlines a number of key steps commanders are to follow in response to an unrestricted report of sexual assault, such as immediately referring the matter to a military criminal investigative organization, informing the victim of available legal services, and determining whether the victim needs or desires a military protective order. However, there are no references to the checklist in Army Regulation 600-20. As a result, Army commanders may be unaware of this resource and miss key steps following a report of sexual assault, which could affect, among other things, the investigation and care the victim receives.

Second, DOD policy directs the Secretaries of the military departments to establish sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) policy that requires commanders to be responsive to a victim's desire to discuss his or her case with the installation commander tasked with oversight responsibility of the SAPR program.⁵² However, there are no references to victim access to the installation commander in Army Regulation 600-20, which could limit the victim's ability to elevate their case, as required by DOD policy.

Third, DOD policy also requires that SARCs request, and upon victim consent expeditiously transfer, case management documents to help ensure continuity of care and SAPR services when a victim has a temporary or permanent change of station or is deployed.⁵³ While Army Regulation 600-20 states that SHARP case documents will not be transferred to the gaining SARC without the victim's consent, it does not reference the speed at which the transfer should occur or what should happen if the case is closed. Moreover, it does not specify that this applies to a temporary change of station or a deployment. This could

⁵¹DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

⁵²DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

⁵³If the SARC has already closed the case and terminated victim contact, no other action is needed. DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

result in delays in transferring cases and, possibly, affect a victim's ability to obtain needed care in a timely fashion.

Fourth, section 1721 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 requires the Secretary of Defense to direct the Secretaries of the military departments to verify and track the compliance of commanding officers in conducting organizational climate assessments.⁵⁴ DOD policy reflects this statutory requirement.⁵⁵ However, as we reported in March 2022, the Army has not consistently verified and tracked compliance of commanding officers in conducting command climate assessments.⁵⁶ Army Regulation 600-20 includes information about command climate assessments and indicates such assessments should be tracked. Specifically, Army Regulation 600-20 states that completion of a command climate assessment is an item that is checked under certain inspection programs and noted in the Military Equal Opportunity database.⁵⁷ However, according to Army officials, the Army had previously used other systems to track and verify command climate assessment surveys. These same officials stated that when those systems went offline, verification of command climate assessments were greatly hindered. In the interim, Army officials stated that the Army is

⁵⁴Pub. L. No. 113-66, § 1721 (2013).

⁵⁵DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

⁵⁶GAO, *Sexual Assault: DOD and Coast Guard Should Ensure Laws Are Implemented to Improve Oversight of Key Prevention and Response Efforts*, [GAO-22-103973](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 28, 2022).

⁵⁷Army Regulation 600-20 refers to organizational climate assessments as command climate assessments.

using spreadsheets to track the completion of such assessments.⁵⁸ We recommended, and DOD concurred, that the Secretary of the Army should review and update guidance, and set a timeframe for completion, to ensure compliance with statutory requirements related to the consistent tracking of command climate assessments.

Fifth, Army policy does not align with DOD policy with regard to SARC access to commanders. Specifically, according to DOD policy, all SARCs are to have direct and unimpeded contact and access to the installation commander and the immediate commander of both the servicemember victim and alleged servicemember offender.⁵⁹ However, Army Regulation 600-20 states that all commanders will ensure that SARCs have “reasonably direct and unimpeded” access to the immediate commander of the victim of a sexual assault, but omits the commander of the alleged servicemember offender. Army Regulation 600-20 does not define what is meant by “reasonably direct and unimpeded” and may result in SARCs having diminished or inconsistent access to commanders, as discussed in more detail later in this report.

Based on our survey of SHARP personnel, we estimate that approximately 30 percent of SHARP Program Managers and 20 percent of SARCs find the SHARP Program Office to be slightly or not very effective at ensuring that Army policy and strategy align with DOD

⁵⁸In September 2011, we found that command climate assessments were not always conducted as required, and recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the service Secretaries to track or verify commander compliance with this requirement. Although DOD has taken some steps to address this recommendation, including issuing a Harassment Prevention Strategy in May 2021, we found that the strategy was not a formal tasking and the offices responsible may not implement it. As such, the recommendation remains open. Similarly, in September 2015, we reported that Army guidance did not include key requirements of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 regarding command climate assessments. We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the military departments and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to modify existing guidance or develop new guidance to comply with requirements set forth in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 and internal DOD guidance. DOD partially concurred with the recommendation and stated that existing Army practice is consistent with the intent of department guidance. As of August 2021, DOD has not responded to further inquiries regarding any actions it has taken to implement this recommendation, and the recommendation remains open. GAO, *Preventing Sexual Harassment: DOD Needs Greater Leadership Commitment and an Oversight Framework*, [GAO-11-809](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 21, 2011); and GAO, *Military Personnel: Additional Steps Are Needed to Strengthen DOD’s Oversight of Ethics and Professionalism Issues*, [GAO-15-711](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 3, 2015).

⁵⁹DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

policy.⁶⁰ In an open-ended response to our survey, one respondent commented that regulations and guidance do not align with DOD policy and that without appropriate tools, support, and guidance, the implementers of policy in the field are left to “fend for themselves.” Another survey respondent commented that the Army and DOD need to “be on the same page” when issuing guidance and stated that conflicting information is constantly issued and it makes the program look “incompetent.”

DOD guidance requires that the military services establish guidance and procedures to implement sexual harassment and assault programs consistent with DOD policy.⁶¹ A SHARP Program Office official reported reviewing SHARP-related guidance in Army Regulation 600-20 for alignment with DOD guidance before it was updated in July 2020. However, as previously discussed, that review did not sufficiently ensure alignment, as we found that the updated policy is not fully aligned with DOD policy in a number of areas. Further, SHARP Program Office officials noted that a restructuring of their office in 2019 led to there being only one individual responsible for policies related to SHARP and other programs—an issue that is discussed in greater detail later in this report. As a result, the office lacks sufficient personnel to consistently track all updated requirements related to sexual harassment and assault prevention and response.

Given that the Army is in the process of developing a consolidated SHARP regulation, it is well positioned to ensure that it fully aligns with DOD policy prior to issuance. However, without conducting a review to ensure alignment, aspects of the regulation may conflict with or omit portions of DOD policy, which could result in inconsistent handling of sexual harassment and assault cases across the department.

⁶⁰The 95 percent confidence interval for these estimates are (17.7, 44.7) and (14.4, 27) for SHARP Program Managers and SARCs, respectively. We asked respondents to rate the effectiveness using the following scale: very effective, moderately effective, slightly effective, not very effective, and not at all effective. This estimate combines responses to responses for slightly effective and not very effective.

⁶¹DOD Directive 6495.01 and DOD Instruction 1020.03.

Access to Commanders Is Impeded for Some Army SARC

Army Regulation 600-20 directs that SARCs are to have “reasonably direct and unimpeded” access to the immediate commander of the victim of a sexual assault. However, some SARCs’ access to commanders is limited. Specifically, some SARCs must go through several layers of management to provide the commander with critical information. For example, a lead SARC at an installation included in our review stated that SHARP personnel at that installation are embedded in the Army Community Services office and thus report to leadership of that office, as well as the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Director—and not directly to the commander. The SARC once communicated information about a report of sexual assault directly to the commander, in accordance with Army requirements to disclose information only to those with a need to know, and reported being reprimanded by a supervisor for failing to notify other leaders first. In contrast, at a prior command, the SARC was designated as special staff and reported directly to the brigade commander and the commander’s deputy, and was authorized to directly communicate with them as needed.⁶²

The 17 commanders we interviewed reported varying levels of interaction and coordination with their SARCs. When asked about the frequency of their communication with SARCs, commanders’ answers ranged from daily interactions to a single quarterly meeting. One commander reported being unable to identify guidance on how frequent communication with the SARC should be, so the commander determined that a quarterly meeting was sufficient. Some commanders reported holding regularly scheduled meetings with their SARCs, while others stated that they meet on an as-needed basis. Two of the commanders we interviewed stated that they consider their SARCs to be special staff, with one commander stating that this designation allows the SARC to have access to the commander at any time.

Based on our survey of SHARP personnel, we estimate that approximately 91 percent of SARCs directly communicate with senior

⁶²Some positions within a command are designated as a commander’s “special staff” and are supervised by the Chief of Staff or Executive Officer, the commander’s principal assistant.

leaders on issues of sexual harassment and assault.⁶³ However, an estimated 9 percent of SARCs have two or more layers of officers or officials between them and discussions with senior leaders, or do not communicate directly with senior leaders about issues related to sexual harassment and assault at all.⁶⁴ In an open-ended survey response, one respondent stated that SHARP offices should not fall under other supervisory offices as this creates layers between the SHARP program and the Commanding General. Another respondent stated that SHARP personnel need to be properly situated in the command so that they have direct access to senior leaders without two or three levels of officials between them.

SHARP Program Office officials acknowledged that SHARP personnel have inconsistent access to commanders across commands and stated that it is essential for SARCs to have unimpeded access to commanders. These officials stated that a 2018 study on how to better resource brigade SHARP programs recommended that SHARP personnel be categorized as special staff, similar to Inspector General and Equal Opportunity professionals within commands.⁶⁵ Officials stated that because SHARP personnel are not considered to be special staff, they may be required to go through four or five levels in the chain of command to reach the commander. In January 2021, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they have considered addressing this challenge by changing how SHARP personnel are categorized, such as by making them special staff. However, in October 2021, these officials told us that implementation of these efforts has been paused due to initiatives to address recommendations from the Fort Hood Committee's report and the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, among other things.

Both the Fort Hood Committee and the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military examined the military services' reporting structures. The Commission recommended that SARCs and VAs be removed from the command reporting structure to

⁶³The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (81.2, 96.4).

⁶⁴The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (3.6, 18.8).

⁶⁵A Center for Army Analysis review of the SHARP program reported similar findings in 2019, stating that, at a minimum, all SHARP personnel should be part of the commander's special staff where they report under the commander, deputy commander, the chief of staff, or executive officer. Center for Army Analysis, *Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program Review* (Fort Belvoir, VA: Apr. 2019).

provide the independence needed to effectively advocate for victims. However, DOD implementation guidance for the Commission's report revised this recommendation and directed the military departments to conduct a workforce study. The study is to address the requirement to establish an independent reporting structure where (1) the lead SARC reports directly to and is operationally supervised by the installation commander or senior mission commander, and (2) the lead SARC supervises all other SARCs and VAs on the installation. While implementing this recommendation will remove most SARCs from the command reporting structure, SHARP Program Office officials stated that SARCs will continue to be aligned to and support the SHARP program in specific units. As such, it will remain important that SARCs have direct and unimpeded access to the commanders of the units they support to discuss issues related to the SHARP program. Further, implementing these recommendations would not ensure that all SARCs have direct and unimpeded access to the immediate commanders of victims and alleged offenders.

Without establishing a mechanism to ensure that SARCs have direct and unimpeded access to the installation commander and to the immediate commander of both the servicemember victim and alleged servicemember offender without going through layers in the chain of command, some SARCs may continue to lack necessary access, in conflict with DOD and Army policy. Such access could be achieved by providing SARCs with the requisite designation or categorization needed to facilitate direct communication with their commander. Without such direct and unimpeded access, commanders may lack critical information needed to effectively manage their SHARP programs and to ensure that victims receive needed care. Further, victim privacy may be compromised by the routing of information through multiple levels of management who may not have a "need to know."

Commanders May Be Unaware of Some SHARP Management Resources

DOD and the Army have developed a range of resources to assist commanders in implementing the SHARP program within their organizations, but commanders are not consistently aware of these resources or where to find them. Specifically, the 17 commanders we spoke with were generally unaware of, and therefore did not use, some of these resources because they were not readily available and easily accessible, or well publicized.

First, commanders we spoke with were generally unaware of available resources. For example, Army Regulation 600-20, the primary regulation governing the SHARP program, refers commanders to an online DOD guide for interviewing and selecting SARCs and VAs that includes suggested questions and special considerations for selecting personnel. The guide notes that commander discussions with new and experienced SARCs and VAs are key to identifying and retaining advocates who will be safe, non-threatening, and empathetic sources of support and information for victims of sexual assault. However, nine of the 17 commanders with whom we spoke at the three Army installations included in our review were not aware of the guide, and only one commander mentioned it as an available resource.⁶⁶ Three of the commanders who were unaware of the guide stated that they would find such a resource helpful or would be interested in reviewing it.

Other commander resources highlighted in DOD policy, such as the *DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Policy Toolkit for Command Teams* and the Commander's 30-Day Checklist, were developed to assist military leaders in establishing climates that discourage sexual harassment and assault and instill confidence in SAPR services.⁶⁷ However, when we asked commanders about the resources they use to manage their SHARP programs, none of them mentioned the Toolkit or Checklist. Rather, commanders most commonly identified (1) Army policy— cited by 13 of 17 commanders, and (2) SHARP personnel— cited by 11 of 17 commanders as the resources used.

Second, DOD and Army resources are not readily available and easily accessible in a single online location or resource. In September 2021, according to SHARP Program Office and SHARP Academy officials, the SHARP Academy launched a website called the SHARP Learning Portal.⁶⁸ SHARP Academy officials stated in October 2021 that the website was intended to organize the various SHARP-related training and educational materials, as well as other DOD and Army resources in a central location and to enable commanders and SHARP personnel to more easily access the information when needed. However, while the

⁶⁶DOD's *Commanders' Guide on Selecting and Recommending SARCs and SAPR VAs* was not discussed in the other seven commander interviews.

⁶⁷DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

⁶⁸The Army SHARP Academy is the Army's designated proponent for all aspects of SHARP education, training, and leader development. SHARP Learning Portal, US Army SHARP Academy, <https://sharplearningportal.army.mil>.

portal contains SHARP-related policy documents and training materials, it does not include links to some of the key resources that we noted previously, which were specifically developed to aid commanders in their implementation of the SHARP program. For example, the portal does not include a link to the *Commanders' Guide on Selecting and Recommending SARCs and SAPR VAs*, nor does it include a link to a source where the guide can be downloaded. While a link to the guide is included in Army Regulation 600-20, which is accessible from the portal, it would first require an individual to be cognizant of the link in the more than 200-page regulation and, as of December 2021, we found that the link did not work.

Further, the portal does not include a direct link to DOD's SAPR Policy Toolkit for Command Teams. To access the toolkit from the SHARP Learning Portal, a user would have to complete multiple, often unintuitive steps. Similarly, the portal does not reference or directly link to DOD's online SAPR library, which includes a number of commander resources such as one-pagers, fact sheets, and training presentations. Rather, in our review of the portal, we had to navigate through a page on regulatory guidance to locate a link to DOD's SAPR website, from which we could access the SAPR library. Additional steps were then required to access specific tools in the library. Without knowing that the SAPR library exists, it is unlikely that an individual would be able to locate these resources through the SHARP Learning Portal.

SHARP Program Office officials stated that such gaps in resources available through the SHARP Learning Portal are due to a lack of coordination between their office and the SHARP Academy, which operates the website. SHARP Academy officials stated in March 2022 that the website was launched to provide a public-facing training resource center for the entire Army, and that links to regulatory guidance were added to aid visitors. However, without including all relevant resources, the website's usefulness to commanders and SHARP personnel is unnecessarily limited.

Third, available resources are not effectively publicized to commanders to promote easy access to them when needed. Army Regulation 600-20 states that commanders are to meet with their SARC within 30 days of taking command for a one-on-one briefing on topics such as unit and area trends and confidentiality requirements for restricted and unrestricted reports of sexual assault, among other things. Though not specified in policy, SHARP Program Office officials told us that SARCs are expected to discuss SHARP-related resources, such as the SARC and VA

interview guide and DOD's SAPR policy toolkit, in the required new commander briefing. They also told us that such resources are discussed during general leadership training courses. Both SARCs and commanders we spoke with during our review acknowledged that such briefings had taken place. However, two commanders we spoke with noted difficulties keeping abreast of current information and balancing competing priorities. As such, resources provided immediately upon taking command may be forgotten in the context of the other information provided.

In addition, while the SHARP Learning Portal contains some resources for commanders, when we spoke with the 17 commanders several weeks after the portal was launched and publicized, none of them mentioned it as a source of guidance for overseeing their SHARP programs. SHARP Program Office officials stated that they initially publicized the SHARP Learning Portal through email notifications from the SHARP Academy, an Army press release, and in announcements during monthly updates with SHARP Program Managers. In the future, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they plan to publicize the portal in SHARP briefings during pre-command courses and SHARP annual refresher training.

Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government states that management should internally communicate the necessary quality information—that is current, complete, accurate, accessible, and timely—to enable personnel to perform key roles in achieving objectives. When determining the most appropriate method of communication, management should consider the target audience and the nature of the information to be communicated. Such information should be readily available to the intended audience when needed.⁶⁹

Without publishing or directly linking to all relevant resources in a single, easily accessible location such as the SHARP Learning Portal and comprehensively publicizing it to commanders, commanders may not be fully aware of available resources that could help them to effectively and efficiently implement their SHARP programs, hindering their usefulness. Moreover, without readily available and easily accessible resources, commanders may inconsistently implement the SHARP program, which could result in varied outcomes for victims across the Army.

⁶⁹[GAO-14-704G](#).

Oversight Is Limited and the Army Does Not Know If the SHARP Program Is Effective

Several factors limit the ability of the Army SHARP Program Office to conduct oversight of SHARP program implementation at the installation and command levels. Specifically, the office lacks visibility over inspection results, funding, and staffing. It also lacks authority to hold commanders accountable for program implementation. The SHARP Program Office's ability to conduct oversight is further challenged because the Army is not currently tracking all disclosed incidents of sexual assault. Moreover, the Army does not know whether the SHARP program is effective.

Oversight of Command Implementation of SHARP Programs Is Limited by Several Factors

The Army SHARP Program Office's ability to conduct oversight of program implementation at the installation and command levels is limited by several challenges. Army Regulation 600-20 specifies that the Director, Army Resilience Directorate (ARD), which oversees the SHARP Program Office, is responsible for policy, implementation, evaluation, and assessment pertaining to the SHARP program across the Army. However, oversight is limited by a lack of visibility over inspection results, funding, and staffing, and by the SHARP Program Office's lack of authority to hold commanders accountable for program implementation.

Organization Inspection Program. The SHARP Organization Inspection Program is the Army's method for maintaining accountability and oversight of sexual assault and sexual harassment processes and services. This inspection program reviews program activities against a compliance checklist.⁷⁰ However, SHARP Program Office officials told us that these inspections are manually documented using paper forms, which prevents them from efficiently analyzing the data collected and thus limits their usefulness for oversight. As such, the SHARP Program Office generally does not know if SHARP programs are in compliance and lacks visibility into trends across installation programs. SHARP Program Office

⁷⁰The SHARP Organization Inspection Program checklist is the standard document for all official inspections of the SHARP program. Army Regulation 600-20. SHARP Program Office officials also cited staff assistance visits—which are focused on mentoring and training—as an oversight tool, but they do not assess compliance with Army and DOD policy.

officials stated that they are working on an automated oversight tool to roll up Organization Inspection Program data, and that they anticipated the tool would be available by the third quarter of fiscal year 2022.

SHARP program funding. The Army spent over \$325 million on the SHARP program between fiscal years 2016 and 2020 to fund various initiatives, such as the development of a plan of action and milestones to support its prevention strategy. However, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they do not have oversight of the execution of SHARP program funds at the installation level, including the extent to which funding is redirected to unrelated programs. Officials stated that SHARP program funds are distributed to installation programs as part of a funding category that encompasses multiple other programs, such as chaplains, Army bands, and funeral support. As a result, commanders may redistribute funds designated for the SHARP program to any other program within that funding category. These officials acknowledged that such redistributions happen often, but stated that they have limited visibility into where the funding is moved because the funds are not centrally managed by their office. Specifically, SHARP Program Office officials stated that program resources are overseen by a Resource Manager who is responsible for managing funding for multiple programs, but commanders have discretion to manage funds for their programs. A senior SHARP Program Office official stated that the extent of the Resource Manager's responsibilities does not allow that individual to closely monitor how funding—including SHARP program funding—is being used at the installation-level. Without such oversight, officials are unable to assess whether current funding levels are sufficient.

SHARP personnel we spoke with at all three installations included in our review noted challenges related to funding, in one case stating that their program had not received funding beyond personnel costs for over a year. For example, SHARP personnel at one installation stated that they were often unable to attend an annual conference hosted by the credentialing body for all SHARP personnel due to a lack of funding. One individual who attended the conference in a prior position noted that the conference provides training opportunities with experts in the field and a venue for sharing best practices with SAPR personnel from across the Army and the other military services.

SHARP personnel at this and another installation told us that funding for SHARP-related outreach events was also a challenge. Specifically, SHARP personnel noted difficulty obtaining funding for marketing materials with SHARP branding to use at events designed to raise

awareness and educate servicemembers about the program. One individual mentioned sometimes funding such events personally. Another individual stated that the SHARP program that the individual supports sometimes uses promotional materials of other programs when the program does not have any materials with SHARP information on them, such as the installation SHARP hotline.

SHARP Program Office officials stated that they would like to address the issue of redistribution of SHARP funds by designating a funding category solely for the SHARP program. Alternatively, these officials suggested that the issue could also be addressed through central management of SHARP funds at the SHARP Program Office level. However, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they do not have a plan or timeline to implement these changes. Without ensuring visibility over program funding at the installation level, the SHARP program is unable to accurately assess resource needs or consistently identify and correct the misuse of SHARP funds for other programs.

SHARP program staffing. Additionally, SHARP Program Office officials do not have visibility over all SHARP personnel. Specifically, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they can only readily identify SHARP Program Managers and full-time SARCs at the brigade level and higher who have access to the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID), approximately 11 percent of all SHARP personnel. Conversely, this means that the SHARP Program Office does not know who 89 percent of its SARCs and VAs (approximately 3,600 personnel) are and where precisely they are located. SHARP Program Office officials stated that they would have to request data from SHARP Program Managers to gather this information, which would take a minimum of 30 days.

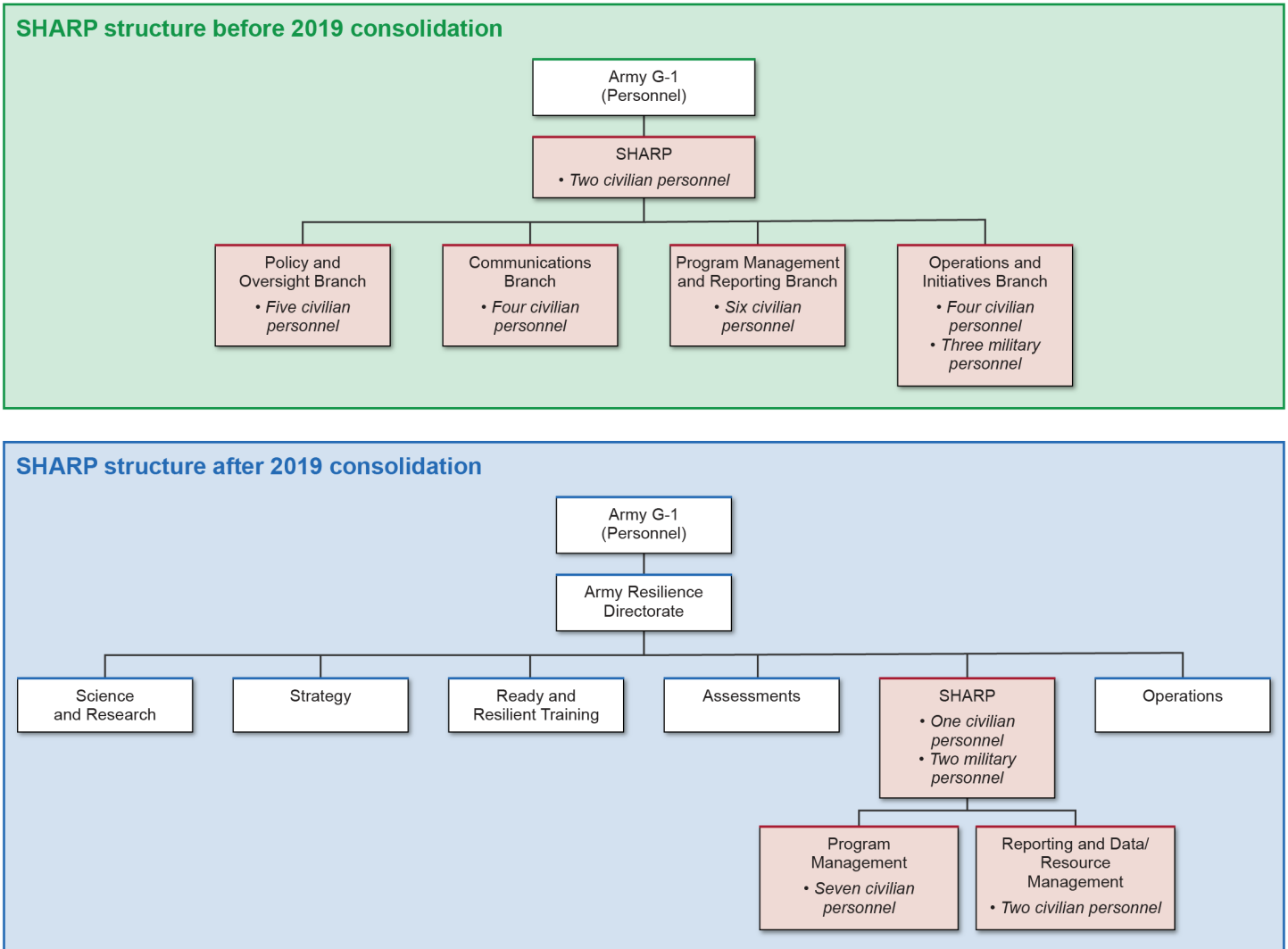
SHARP Program Office officials identified the office's limited visibility over installation-level SHARP personnel as a constraint on their program oversight, particularly given the high rate of turnover among military SHARP personnel. Military personnel accounted for approximately 89 percent of all SARCs and VAs in fiscal year 2020. These officials stated that they are developing a module in the Army's Strategic Management System—a performance management tool available to all Army components—to provide increased visibility over installation-level SHARP personnel. These officials stated that the module will be populated by existing systems and by data provided by SHARP Program Managers on a regular basis, but they have not yet determined the frequency with which these data will be updated, and they do not have a timeline for completion of the module. As a result, the SHARP Program Office

continues to lack visibility over personnel turnover and vacant positions, and cannot easily identify and contact the majority of the SHARP workforce.

Commander accountability. SHARP Program Office officials stated that their office, as currently structured, lacks the authority to hold commanders accountable for implementation of their SHARP programs. Specifically, the SHARP Program Office is structured under the Army Resilience Directorate (ARD) within the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G1). A senior SHARP Program Office official stated that G1 is an administrative office and therefore lacks such authority. For example, the G1 office does not have the enforcement authority to correct deficiencies identified in inspections if the commander in question is unwilling to take such actions, according to this official. Similarly, SHARP Program Office officials stated that if they identify that SHARP funds at the installation level were used improperly for another program, they can request that those funds be returned, but they do not have the authority to enforce that request.

Prior to a 2019 reorganization, the SHARP Program Office was a standalone program within G1 and was led by a Senior Executive Service Director. According to a senior SHARP Program Office official, that individual met quarterly with the Chief of Staff of the Army, providing an avenue to elevate concerns with command implementation and hold commanders accountable. In 2019, the SHARP Program Office was consolidated under ARD, in part, to achieve efficiencies by combining functions such as resource management across multiple programs and co-locating systems and office space, among other things. However, the consolidation and resulting decrease in the rank of SHARP Program Office leadership in turn reduced SHARP program leaders' clout and access to senior Army leaders, according to this official (see figure 1 for the structure of the SHARP Program Office before and after the consolidation within ARD).

Figure 1: Organizational Chart of the Army SHARP Program Office Before and After Consolidation within the Army Resilience Directorate



SHARP Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention
 Source: GAO analysis of Army information. | GAO-22-104673

Note: The SHARP Program Office utilized contractor support prior to the 2019 consolidation within the Army Resilience Directorate and continues to do so. According to SHARP Program Office officials, contract support is at a fixed price and the number of contractor personnel varies, but was generally the same before and after the consolidation.

The consolidation of the SHARP Program Office within ARD also resulted in a significant decrease in personnel in that office—from 24 permanent positions in 2018 to 12 as of 2021.⁷¹ Further, the SHARP Program Office lost dedicated personnel with key functionalities, such as those focused on research and prevention, as these functions were consolidated at the ARD level to support multiple programs. Regardless of the decrease in staff, SHARP Program Office officials stated that there was not a commensurate decrease in their responsibilities. As a result, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they do not have adequate personnel or funding to conduct oversight functions, such as inspections, as frequently as they would like. These officials added that personnel at subordinate commands face similar challenges with conducting inspections of their reporting units. For example, a respondent to our survey of SHARP personnel stated that the individual had experienced one inspection in 11 years of working with the SHARP program, even though Army Regulation 600-20 requires that inspections occur annually. Further, SHARP Program Office officials stated that it has been a challenge to manage competing priorities, such as their office's role in implementing the 70 recommendations related to the Fort Hood Committee and the more than 80 recommendations related to the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military.

ARD and SHARP Program Office officials expressed concerns about their roles and responsibilities as an administrative office in holding commanders accountable for implementation of their SHARP programs. However, as previously discussed, Army Regulation 600-20 specifies that ARD, which oversees the SHARP Program Office, is responsible for policy, implementation, evaluation, and assessment pertaining to the SHARP Program across the Army. DOD policy states that the Secretaries of the military departments are responsible for ensuring commanders are accountable for implementing and executing the SAPR program at their installations, consistent with DOD and service guidance.⁷² Additionally, DOD policy states that the Secretaries of the military departments are responsible for providing program-appropriate resources to enable compliance with the policies set forth in DOD Directive 6495.01 and DOD Instruction 6495.02.⁷³

⁷¹As of December 2021, a senior SHARP Program Office official stated that there were eight full-time employees in the SHARP Program Office due to vacancies.

⁷²DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

⁷³DOD Directive 6495.01.

In October 2021, DOD issued guidance for implementation of recommendations stemming from the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military. The guidance includes a requirement that the military departments complete a workforce study by October 2022 that includes, among other things, designing an oversight structure to support the proper execution of the sexual assault prevention and response mission throughout the echelons of command, with full implementation planned by the end of fiscal year 2027.⁷⁴ However, the guidance does not include ensuring: (1) visibility over all areas of command implementation of the SHARP program; (2) a structure that enables the SHARP Program Office to enforce commander accountability for program implementation; or (3) adequate personnel resources for carrying out oversight responsibilities.

Without ensuring that the designed oversight structure includes a mechanism for comprehensive oversight of all areas of SHARP programs at the installation and command level—including visibility over inspection results, funding, and staffing—the Army will continue to be unable to consistently identify and correct noncompliance and track and address trends. Further, if such an oversight structure does not position the SHARP Program Office to enforce commander accountability for implementing SHARP programs and ensure that the office has adequate personnel resources to carry out its oversight responsibilities, the Army may continue to face difficulties identifying and addressing program implementation challenges.

The Army Does Not Track All Disclosed Incidents of Sexual Assault

Although SHARP Program Office officials identified reports of sexual assault as a key measure for the SHARP program, the Army does not track all disclosed incidents of sexual assault, further limiting visibility needed for program oversight. Specifically, incidents of sexual assault reported to a VA or SARC without DSAID access—which, as noted previously, is about 89 percent of all SHARP personnel—or to another service provider, such as medical personnel, may not be tracked if the victim declines to file an official report.

⁷⁴Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, *Guidance for Implementing Tier 1 Recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Oct. 13, 2021).

SHARP personnel with whom we spoke at all three installations in our review reported consulting with victims who experienced sexual assault but chose not to file a restricted or unrestricted report. For example, one sexual assault medical forensic examiner discussed the provision of services to five victims in the prior year who experienced sexual assault but who declined to file restricted or unrestricted reports because they did not want to be affiliated with the SHARP program. The official stated that these victims may be uncomfortable with the available reporting options or may not want to work with the SHARP program. According to this official, when the issue was raised with installation SHARP personnel, they stated that if victims do not file an official report, “they do not exist.”

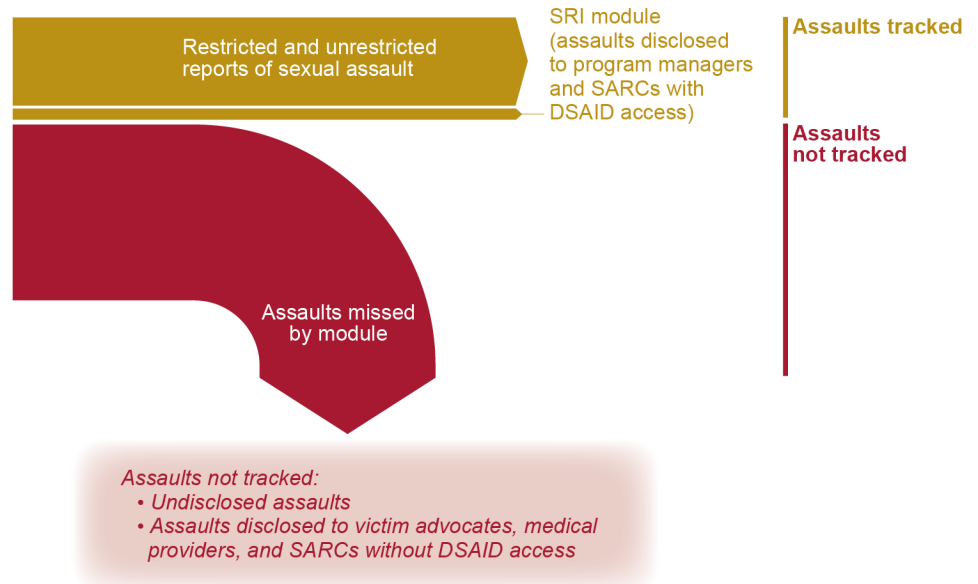
Army Regulation 600-20 directs ARD to monitor sexual assault and to identify and report emerging trends, among other things. DOD policy further directs the Secretaries of the military departments to direct that all reports of sexual assault be entered into DSAID.⁷⁵ To improve visibility over sexual assaults that may be disclosed to SAPR personnel, but where the victim does not file an official restricted or unrestricted report, DOD created and piloted a SAPR Related Inquiry module in DSAID. As of October 1, 2021, DOD guidance directs that SAPR personnel with DSAID access are to document such disclosures in the SAPR Related Inquiry module.⁷⁶ However, according to SHARP Program Office officials, only program managers and full-time SARCs have access to DSAID.⁷⁷ As such, the majority of SHARP personnel—approximately 89 percent—do not have DSAID access and therefore are not required to document disclosures of sexual assault or report them to those SHARP personnel who do have access to the database (see figure 2).

⁷⁵Army Regulation 600-20; and DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

⁷⁶DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

⁷⁷SHARP Program Office officials stated that the Army has afforded a very limited number of VAs access to DSAID via an exception to policy.

Figure 2: Army Tracking of Disclosed Incidents of Sexual Assault



DSAID Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database
 SARC Sexual Assault Response Coordinator
 SRI Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Related Inquiry

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-22-104673

SHARP Program Office officials stated that they do not plan to issue guidance on documenting disclosures made to program personnel who do not have DSAID access, as the SAPRO guidance does not include such a requirement. They stated that such incidents would only be tracked if reported to a brigade-level SARC. However, the SAPRO guidance does not preclude those SAPR personnel without DSAID access from reporting such disclosures to a SARC with access for documentation in the SAPR Related Inquiry module. ARD and SHARP Program Office officials also expressed concerns with protecting victim confidentiality when tracking such disclosures. However, the module does not require SAPR personnel to enter victims' names or other identifying information when documenting such disclosures. Further, the Army is already implementing SAPRO guidance for use of the SAPR Related Inquiry module by SHARP personnel with DSAID access.

Without issuing guidance to ensure that SHARP personnel and medical providers without DSAID access share disclosures of sexual assault with a brigade-level SARC for documentation in DSAID, the Army misses an opportunity to increase visibility into unreported incidents of sexual assault. As a result, incidents of sexual assault that are not officially

reported, but are disclosed, are being inconsistently tracked in the SAPR Related Inquiry module. Moreover, the Army is unnecessarily limiting its access to data that are available on a historically underreported crime, and is thus missing opportunities to identify and address trends in sexual assault incidents occurring within the service.

The Army Tracks Some Sexual Harassment and Assault Trend Data but Does Not Know Whether the SHARP Program Is Effective

Army SHARP personnel and commanders use several tools to track trend data related to sexual harassment and assault. For example, in addition to specific sexual harassment and assault case data contained in the Integrated Case Reporting System and DSAID, the SHARP Program Office uses the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members to estimate and track the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault over time.⁷⁸ At the installation level, SHARP personnel and commanders told us they use command climate surveys to track some trends related to sexual harassment and assault, such as identifying gaps in servicemember knowledge about how to report such incidents.⁷⁹ SHARP personnel and commanders we spoke with noted that they also use focus groups, such as to gather additional information on issues that the surveys identified. Trends identified by installation-level SHARP personnel and commanders using these and other tools are also

⁷⁸DOD has conducted the biennial (quadrennial prior to 2010) Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members since 1988. DOD uses the survey to estimate past year prevalence rates of sexual harassment and sexual assault, among other things.

⁷⁹The Defense Organizational Climate Survey, sometimes called a command climate survey, is a confidential, command-requested survey that, along with other tools, makes up a command climate assessment. It is focused on issues of organizational effectiveness, equal opportunity, and sexual assault response and prevention. Commanders are generally required to conduct a command climate assessment within 60 days of taking command and annually thereafter. As previously discussed, we reported on and made recommendations related to the military services' tracking and verifying of compliance with requirements to conduct command climate assessments in 2011 and 2015, and those recommendations remain open. [GAO-11-809](#) and [GAO-15-711](#).

discussed and tracked at regular installation Sexual Assault Review Board meetings.⁸⁰

However, the Army does not know whether its SHARP program is effective at preventing and responding to such incidents. We identified two key issues that limit the Army's ability to know the extent to which the SHARP program is achieving its prevention and response goals: (1) the SHARP program lacks fully-developed performance measures, and (2) the SHARP program has not been systematically evaluated for effectiveness.

The SHARP program lacks fully-developed performance measures.

Our prior work identified 10 key attributes of performance measures as contributing to success in evaluating performance and ensuring officials have the information necessary to measure progress towards achieving program goals and priorities. Table 1 summarizes these key attributes of successful performance measures and potential adverse consequences if these attributes are missing. While these attributes may not cover all the attributes of successful performance measures, our prior work indicates that they address important areas.⁸¹

⁸⁰The Sexual Assault Review Board is composed of commanders, SHARP personnel, and other relevant officials, and meets monthly. Its purpose is to ensure victims' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are provided for, their rights are protected, and their recovery is facilitated. In addition, the Board reviews cases arising from unrestricted reports of sexual assault to improve processes, system accountability, and victim access to quality services. Army Regulation 600-20.

⁸¹GAO's prior work on performance measurement identified key attributes of performance measures. See [GAO-03-143](#), [GAO-11-646SP](#), [GAO-12-77](#), [GAO-13-432](#), [GAO-14-49](#), [GAO-15-759](#), [GAO-16-405](#), [GAO-16-61](#), and [GAO-17-542](#).

Table 1: GAO’s Key Attributes of Successful Performance Measures

Attribute	Definition	Potentially adverse consequences of not meeting attribute
Key attributes evaluated by reviewing performance measures individually		
Linkage	Measure is aligned with division and agency-wide goals and mission and clearly communicated throughout the organization.	Behaviors and incentives created by measures do not support achieving division or agency-wide goals or mission.
Baseline and trend data	Measure has a baseline and trend data associated with it to identify, monitor, and report changes in performance and to help ensure that performance is viewed in context.	Goals may not permit subsequent comparisons with actual performance.
Measurable target	Measure has a numerical goal.	Cannot determine whether performance is meeting expectations.
Clarity	Measure is clearly stated, and the name and definition are consistent with the methodology used to calculate it.	Data could be confusing and misleading to users.
Objectivity	Measure is reasonably free from significant bias or manipulation.	Performance assessments may be systematically over- or understated.
Reliability	Measure produces the same result under similar conditions.	Reported performance data are inconsistent and add uncertainty.
Key attributes evaluated by reviewing performance measures as a set		
Limited overlap	Measure should provide new information beyond that provided by other measures.	Managers may have to sort through redundant, costly information that does not add value.
Core program activities	Measures cover the activities that an entity is expected to perform to support the intent of the program.	Not enough information available in core program areas to managers and stakeholders.
Government-wide priorities	Each measure should cover a priority, such as quality, timeliness, and cost of service.	A program’s overall success is at risk if all priorities are not addressed.
Balance	A suite of measures ensures that an organization’s various priorities are covered.	Measures may over emphasize some goals and skew incentives.

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

When we asked SHARP Program Office officials to provide performance measures for the SHARP program, they cited three measures: (1) the number of sexual harassment and assault reports, (2) the estimated prevalence of sexual harassment and assault, and (3) the ratio of those two measures. However, these data points do not exhibit some of the key attributes of successful performance measures that are necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the Army’s sexual harassment and assault prevention and response efforts, as shown in figure 3 below.⁸²

⁸²Performance measurement is the ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress toward pre-established goals.

Figure 3: Comparison of Performance Measures for the Army SHARP Program to GAO’s Key Attributes of Successful Performance Measures

Measures		Reports of sexual harassment and assault	Estimated prevalence	Ratio of reports to estimated prevalence
Attributes for individual measures	Linkage	○	◐	○
	Baseline and trend	●	◐	◐
	Measurable target	○	○	◐
	Clarity	○	◐	○
	Objectivity	○	●	●
	Reliability	◐	◐	◐
Attributes for an overall suite of measures	Limited overlap	◐	◐	◐
	Core program activities	◐	◐	◐
	Government-wide priorities	○	○	○
	Balance	○	○	○

● Attributes exhibited ◐ Attributes partially exhibited ○ Attributes not exhibited

Source: GAO analysis of Army information. | GAO-22-104673

Accessible Data Table for Figure 3

Measures	Reports of sexual harassment and assault	Estimated prevalence	Ratio of reports to estimated prevalence
Attributes for individual measures	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes not exhibited
	Attributes exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes not exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes exhibited	Attributes exhibited
	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
Attributes for an overall suite of measures	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited	Attributes partially exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited
	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited	Attributes not exhibited

Note: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Below is our detailed assessment of each of the three performance measures for the SHARP program:

- **Reports of sexual harassment and assault.** Army SHARP Program Office officials, SHARP personnel, and 12 of the 17 commanders with whom we spoke identified the number of reported incidents of sexual harassment and assault as a primary, and in some cases, the only, measure they use to assess effectiveness. However, this measure lacks key attributes, including clarity and objectivity. Specifically, the measure is not clearly defined in that it does not specify what constitutes a reported incident. The number of reported incidents in a given timeframe may be conflated with the total number of servicemember victims in that timeframe. However, a single reported incident may include one victim or it could include multiple victims. Similarly, reports may be made by civilians against an alleged servicemember offender, or servicemembers may report incidents that took place prior to joining the Army. Without a clear understanding of what comprises a reported incident, users of these data may not have an accurate understanding of how many servicemembers have been subjected to sexual harassment and assault. Similarly, officials stated they were unsure how to objectively interpret fluctuations in the number of reported incidents of sexual harassment and assault. They noted that an increase in reports could either signal increased trust in the reporting process or conversely, could reflect an actual increase in the number of incidents, indicating a decrease in program effectiveness.
- **Estimated prevalence of sexual harassment and assault.** SHARP Program Office officials also told us that they use survey estimates of prevalence rates of sexual harassment and assault as estimated in the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members to evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program. However, this measure also lacks key attributes of successful performance measures. For example, the measure may lack a reliable baseline and trend data going forward. Specifically, officials with DOD's Office of People Analytics, the office that develops and fields the survey, stated that the Office of Management and Budget recently reviewed and made substantial changes to the 2021 survey. Changes included replacing the survey's long-standing measure of sexual assault prevalence with a measure for unwanted sexual contact. These officials stated that the unwanted sexual contact measure is considered to produce comparable estimates to the previous sexual assault measure, but noted that comparisons between this survey and

data from prior surveys will require caveats.⁸³ Officials from the Office of People Analytics stated that they hope to further test the unwanted sexual contact measure during the next iteration of the survey in 2023 to enable reporting on such comparisons with greater statistical certainty. However, these officials stated that time did not permit such testing this year.

- **Ratio of reports to estimated prevalence.** SHARP Program Office officials stated that they use the ratio of reports of sexual harassment and assault to the estimated prevalence of such incidents as another performance measure. However, this measure does not fully exhibit most of the key attributes of successful performance measures. For example, the measure lacks a measurable target that is tracked consistently. SHARP Program Office officials told us that they previously had a goal to decrease the gap between reported incidents and estimated prevalence by 5 percent each year. They also told us that progress towards this goal was reported monthly to Army leadership but they now only track the measure internally. Further, these officials noted that the most recent prevalence data is from fiscal year 2018, and is therefore not directly comparable to current report numbers.

In addition, the Army's suite of measures does not allow it to track performance with regard to all of the SHARP program's goals and objectives. As a result, its current performance measures lack balance. For example, one of the SHARP program's primary goals is the prevention of sexual assault. However the Army's primary performance measure—number of reported incidents—does not, by itself, indicate how well prevention efforts are working. While estimated prevalence could be an indicator of whether prevention efforts generally are working, it does not provide specific information on which prevention efforts are working, thus limiting its usefulness. Further, the Army's three performance measures do not indicate how well the SHARP program is meeting its goal of supporting victims of sexual harassment and assault. According to SHARP Program Office officials, they are currently unable to measure progress towards this goal because they do not collect data from victims about their experiences with the SHARP program, as it may violate their privacy. However, a SHARP Program Office official stated that the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military conducted interviews with victims while taking measures to protect their

⁸³Other changes to the 2021 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members include cuts to questions related to bystander intervention, workplace climate, training, alcohol use, and details on the characteristics of sexual harassment and assault incidents.

privacy. The official noted that these interviews were very informative, particularly because they provided insight about challenges related to sexual assault response, such as providing support to victims, over which the SHARP Program Office lacks visibility.

DOD's *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023*, which outlines the Department's strategic approach to prevent sexual assault, states that DOD and the military services should develop, implement, and institutionalize an evaluation process, to include validated performance measures.⁸⁴ However, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they have not fully developed performance measures because of competing priorities, including their ongoing efforts to implement recommendations related to the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military and other efforts. Additionally, in November 2021, SHARP Program Office officials told us that they lack sufficiently clear goals and objectives for the SHARP program that are necessary to develop performance measures. Specifically, they stated that current SHARP regulations do not identify objectives necessary to measure and demonstrate progress.

Further, in November 2015, we recommended that DOD, in coordination with the military services, fully develop performance measures for the prevention of sexual assault that include all key attributes of successful performance measures.⁸⁵ However, to date, DOD has taken some steps to implement this recommendation, but has not fully developed performance measures for the prevention of sexual assault, and therefore has not provided the Army—or the other military services—with a guiding framework on which to model performance measures for their respective sexual assault prevention and response initiatives. However, DOD's implementation of this recommendation would only help the Army to partially address the SHARP program's goals given its dual focus on both sexual harassment and assault.

Without a suite of performance measures that measure the desired outcomes for the SHARP program and that are, at a minimum, clearly defined, objective, balanced, and consistently tracked for the analysis of baseline and trend data, the Army is unable to measure progress towards achieving its goals and objectives. Further, it will not have the information

⁸⁴DOD, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023* (April 2019).

⁸⁵[GAO-16-61](#).

necessary for determining which of its prevention and response efforts are working and which ones may need to be revised or eliminated.

The Army has not systematically evaluated the SHARP program for effectiveness. Although the Army has stated that the SHARP program has prioritized assessment since its inception in 2009, SHARP Program Office officials told us that the program has not been evaluated for effectiveness. During our review, SHARP Program Office officials stated that they have not done the research necessary to conduct such an evaluation. Additionally, among current and recent SHARP personnel we surveyed, approximately 26 percent responded that they do not assess the effectiveness of the SHARP program in their commands, and approximately 18 percent were unsure whether they assess effectiveness.⁸⁶ Further, the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military reported that the military services collect quantitative data and anecdotal information on various programs, but do not conduct scientific evaluations to show whether such programs are truly working to improve the response to sexual assault.

According to leading practices concerning program evaluation planning, agencies should establish evaluation plans.⁸⁷ These leading practices define program evaluation as an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency. Leading practices concerning program evaluations that we have identified define effectiveness as the extent to which a program or intervention is achieving its intended goals, as determined by a program evaluation.⁸⁸

⁸⁶The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (18.8, 32.3) and (12.0, 24.7) respectively.

⁸⁷GAO, *Program Evaluation: Key Terms and Concepts*, [GAO-21-404SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 22, 2021); OMB Memorandum No. M-19-23, *Phase 1 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas, Personnel, and Planning Guidance* (July 10, 2019); and OMB Memorandum No. M-20-12, *Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices* (Mar. 10, 2020). OMB Memorandum No. M-19-23 instructs federal agencies on how to implement the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-435 (2019), which mandated that federal agencies create certain plans and other products on a recurring basis, including evaluation plans. While not necessarily controlling for evaluation plans like the one under discussion here, the memorandum includes best practices for agencies to follow when practicing evidence-based policymaking.

⁸⁸[GAO-21-404SP](#).

According to these leading practices, program evaluation and performance measurement are distinct but complementary. In contrast, performance measurement can tell an agency how a program is performing.⁸⁹ It concerns the ongoing monitoring and reporting of a program's accomplishments and progress towards pre-established goals.⁹⁰

DOD's *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023* states that DOD and the military services should develop, implement, and institutionalize an evaluation process—noting that ongoing evaluation is critical for quality improvement as well as to determine which activities should be sustained and which should be discontinued. The plan describes evaluation as an essential skill related to prevention planning and execution.⁹¹ *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* states that management should establish and operate monitoring activities and evaluate the results, and should use quality information—that is, information that is appropriate, current, complete, and accurate, among other things—to achieve the entity's objectives. Further, the standards provide that management should demonstrate a commitment to recruit, develop, and retain competent personnel—those with the qualifications to carry out assigned responsibilities, including relevant knowledge and skills—to achieve objectives.⁹²

SHARP Program Office officials stated that they have not systematically evaluated the effectiveness of the SHARP program because they lack the personnel needed to undertake such initiatives amid competing priorities, as previously discussed. Specifically, these officials stated that they do not have personnel with the relevant skillset needed to evaluate effectiveness and are therefore unable to conduct the research necessary to develop program evaluation tools. Of the SHARP personnel surveyed who responded that they do not assess the effectiveness of their SHARP programs or are unsure if they do so, 42 of the 146 personnel who provided additional comments cited constraints related to time, resources, tools, and/or personnel to focus on assessment.

⁸⁹[GAO-21-404SP](#).

⁹⁰[GAO-21-404SP](#) and OMB Memorandum No. M-20-12 (Mar. 10, 2020).

⁹¹DOD, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023*.

⁹²[GAO-14-704G](#).

The DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military recommended that DOD develop a dedicated and capable prevention workforce, whose responsibilities are to include continuous evaluation.⁹³ In implementing guidance for this recommendation, DOD noted that individuals leading prevention efforts require specialized expertise to perform the required duties. However, such evaluation expertise within the prevention workforce may not lead to comprehensive evaluation of SHARP program efforts, to include response activities. Further, as previously noted, DOD expects that it will take nearly a decade to fully implement all of the Commission's recommendations—some of which are not slated to be complete until fiscal year 2030.

In March 2022, we reported that DOD had not fully established an evaluation plan and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of its SAPR programs, as required by statute.⁹⁴ Moreover, we reported that DOD had not issued standards to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the military services' SAPR programs in reducing the number of sexual assaults, among other things. We recommended that DOD set a timeframe to establish an evaluation plan and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the SAPR program and related activities in achieving its intended outcomes.⁹⁵ The lack of such a plan and related standards at the DOD level has limited the Army's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program in preventing and responding to sexual assault.

However, as previously noted, the Army is unique among the military services in combining its efforts to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment, as well as sexual assault, into a single program. DOD's implementation of this recommendation would not address the need for the Army to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program as a whole, to include its efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment. Further, given that the SHARP program has not been systematically evaluated for effectiveness since its inception over a decade ago, further delaying such an evaluation in anticipation of an

⁹³Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military*.

⁹⁴Section 1612(b) of the Ike Skelton NDAA for Fiscal Year 2011 requires that the Secretary of Defense use the sexual assault prevention and response evaluation plan developed under section 1602(c) of the Ike Skelton NDAA for Fiscal Year 2011 to ensure that the armed forces implement and comply with assessment and evaluation standards issued under 1612(a). Pub. L. No. 111-383, § 1602(c), § 1612(a)-(b) (2011).

⁹⁵[GAO-22-103973](#).

evaluation plan and standards from DOD limits the Army's ability to determine whether the SHARP program is meeting its goals in a timely manner.

Without developing and implementing a continuous evaluation plan that employs a suite of fully-developed performance measures to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program, the Army does not know whether its efforts are effective in achieving its goals. Further, without developing such a plan, the Army may miss opportunities to prioritize promising approaches and identify and address challenges. In addition, without ensuring sufficient personnel with the relevant competencies, skills, and knowledge needed to implement the plan, the Army may continue to invest resources in efforts that do not provide it with adequate and useful information about the effectiveness of the SHARP program on which to base decisions.

The Army Has Addressed Some Reporting Barriers, but Lacks Visibility into Others

The Army Has Identified and Taken Steps to Address Some Reporting Barriers

SHARP Program Office officials stated that they identify barriers to reporting sexual harassment and assault through anecdotal feedback and command climate surveys. Specifically, officials noted that information about reporting barriers is often gathered through feedback from SHARP personnel about their firsthand experiences with victims. For example, if a victim chooses to file an unrestricted report of sexual assault but later decides not to participate in the prosecution of the case, the victim may share the reason with the SARC or VA. Another official noted that climate surveys can also provide information about reporting barriers, particularly through commanders' discretion to add additional questions to the survey that may garner responses that provide insights into such barriers.

Officials we spoke with at the headquarters and installation levels identified a number of possible reporting barriers, as shown in table 2.

These barriers generally align with common reporting barriers identified outside of the military.⁹⁶

⁹⁶To identify common reporting barriers outside of the military, we reviewed information published by the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), which operates DOD's Safe Helpline, and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), a nonprofit that provides information and tools to prevent and respond to sexual violence and translates research and trends into best practices. We also reviewed the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics report on the agency's annual National Crime Victimization Survey for 2020, the most recent year for which data were available. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization, 2020*, NCJ 301775 (Oct. 2021).

Table 2: Common Barriers to Reporting Sexual Harassment and Assault Identified through Interviews with Army Officials

Barrier	Explanation
Fear of retaliation	Victims may fear retaliation and related behaviors (e.g., ostracism and reprisal) from their offender, peers, or chain of command.
Concerns about confidentiality	Victims may not trust that their confidentiality will be maintained and identity protected through the reporting process.
Fear of not being believed	Victims may fear that others, such as their peers, law enforcement officials, or their chain of command, will not believe them.
Belief that the offender will not be held accountable	Victims may not trust that their offender will be held accountable in a timely or appropriate manner, if at all.
Belief that the incident is not important enough to report	Victims may not believe that the incident they experienced was serious enough to report.

Source: GAO analysis of interview discussions. | GAO-22-104673

The Army has taken steps to address some identified reporting barriers. For example, SHARP Program Office officials told us that they learned through comments submitted on climate surveys that victim concern about disciplinary action for collateral misconduct was a barrier to reporting. As a result, Army guidance provides commanders with discretion to defer action on collateral misconduct in connection with reports of sexual assault until the sexual assault investigation is complete. Specifically, Army Regulation 600-20 states that commanders should take into account the trauma to a victim and dispose of a victim’s collateral misconduct in a manner that encourages reporting of sexual assaults and the continued cooperation of the victim.⁹⁷ Similarly, DOD and Army guidance identify concerns about confidentiality as a barrier to reporting sexual assault and, as a result, established the restricted reporting option to allow victims to report an assault and receive services confidentially.⁹⁸

⁹⁷Army Regulation 600-20. Collateral misconduct is victim misconduct that might be in time, place, or circumstance associated with the victim’s sexual assault incident, such as underage drinking or other alcohol related offenses. In October 2021, in response to section 539A of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, DOD issued guidance directing that victims should not be disciplined for alleged minor collateral misconduct—as determined by commanders—in connection with a report of sexual assault. Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) Memorandum, *Safe-to-Report Policy for Service Member Victims of Sexual Assault* (Oct. 25, 2021).

⁹⁸DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1 and Army Regulation 600-20.

The Army Lacks Visibility into the Range of Reporting Barriers

During the course of our review, we identified additional barriers that have not been addressed—including some that are specific to the Army—that may prevent servicemembers from reporting. These barriers are discussed in detail below.

- Military SARCs and VAs have limited relevant expertise.** Most military SHARP personnel perform their SHARP duties as a collateral (or additional) duty. Those who perform full-time SHARP duties do so temporarily—generally for a period of about 2 years—before returning to their area of specialization. They attend 2- or 6-week training courses, depending on whether their position is a collateral or a full-time duty.

In contrast, civilian SHARP personnel with whom we spoke held advanced degrees and had years of experience in relevant fields such as social work, mental health, and law enforcement, but their numbers are limited in comparison to military SHARP personnel. Specifically, the Army reported that, in fiscal year 2020, approximately 89 percent of all SARCs and VAs were military personnel (3,536 individuals), and about 90 percent performed the role as a collateral duty (3,172 individuals). Further, section 584 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 and DOD guidance require that units at the brigade and brigade-equivalent level maintain full-time SARCs and VAs.⁹⁹ (See table 3 for additional information about the SHARP workforce in fiscal year 2020.)

Table 3: Army Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC) and Victim Advocates (VA) by Military Affiliation and Full- or Part-Time Status, Fiscal Year 2020

Affiliation	Position	Full-Time		Part-Time / Collateral Duty		Total	
		Number	SARC and VA rates	Number	SARC and VA rates	Number	SARC and VA rates
Military	SARC	219	5.5%	533	13.5%	752	19.0%
	VA	145	3.7%	2,639	66.7%	2,784	70.4%
Total Military		364	9.2%	3,172	80.2%	3,536	89.4%
Civilian	SARC	156	3.9%	26	0.7%	182	4.6%
	VA	186	4.7%	53	1.3%	239	6.0%

⁹⁹Pub. L. No. 112-81, § 584 (2011) and DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1.

Total Civilian	342	8.6%	79	2.0%	421	10.6%
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Source: GAO analysis of Army data. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Similarly, the DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military reported that the current sexual assault prevention and response workforce is not adequately structured and resourced, and that it de-emphasizes specialization and experience.¹⁰⁰ As a result, victims may lack confidence in the expertise of the SARCs and VAs to whom they are most likely to have access and report an incident of sexual harassment or assault. For example, we spoke to one servicemember who told us about accompanying a friend to report an assault, but the military SARC who received the report argued that the experience was not assault.¹⁰¹ According to the individual, the SARC had to reference a SHARP program “cheat sheet” before acknowledging that the experience was an assault and allowing the victim to file a report.

- **Military SARCs and VAs may not be suited to caring effectively for victims.** SHARP personnel and commanders with whom we spoke noted that some military SARCs and VAs may not have the temperament necessary for the role, such as the ability to communicate with victims empathetically. For example, drill sergeants at a training installation in our review also served as collateral duty SARCs and VAs.¹⁰² Further, trainees were typically required to go through their drill sergeant to make a report to a SARC or VA, according to SHARP personnel at that installation. We spoke with some SHARP personnel and a commander who stated that they do

¹⁰⁰Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military*.

¹⁰¹We conducted interviews with five servicemembers who volunteered to speak with us about their experiences with the SHARP program. For additional information about this methodology, see appendix II.

¹⁰²In 2014, we reported on issues related to sexual assault in initial military training environments, to include misconduct involving instructors such as drill sergeants. Among other things, we reported that a 2012 Air Force report found that recruits in a basic training environment feared potential backlash from instructors for reporting sexual misconduct. Further, Army Regulation 600-20 states that drill sergeants are not to be appointed as SHARP professionals or provide advocacy services outside of trainee units. However, commanders with whom we spoke who oversee basic training units noted that they have a limited pool of candidates within their units who meet rank requirements to serve as SARCs and VAs. GAO, *Military Personnel: DOD Needs to Take Further Actions to Prevent Sexual Assault during Initial Military Training*, [GAO-14-806](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2014).

not believe this is a concern. For example, one commander stated that he instructs collateral duty SHARP personnel to remove their drill sergeant hats when performing their SHARP duties, which he believed made them less intimidating to trainees.

However, other commanders and SHARP personnel stated that victims, and particularly trainees, may be intimidated by the prospect of reporting to their drill sergeant. For example, SHARP personnel at the same installation stated that they have worked with drill sergeants who are collateral duty SHARP personnel, and stated that some did not show appropriate empathy to victims. A commander with whom we spoke stated that all of the collateral duty SHARP personnel in his command were drill sergeants, which could be intimidating to trainees because, while drill sergeants are coaches to trainees, they also frequently yell at trainees. A commander at another installation noted that not having appropriate individuals in SHARP positions can have a chilling effect on reporting.

- **Perceptions about false reporting prevalence may deter reporting.** Officials we spoke with at the installations in our review believed that servicemembers' false reporting of sexual harassment and assault—alleging that an incident occurred when it did not—is prevalent. Specifically, we talked with Army SHARP personnel, chaplains, and legal officials who stated that they believed false reporting to be a problem for the SHARP program, and that this perception is common among soldiers. For example, SHARP personnel at one installation in our review stated that servicemembers may falsely accuse someone of sexual harassment or assault because they do not like them. At the same installation, a legal official we spoke with stated that servicemembers may make a false report to obtain a transfer if they do not like their current posting. In another instance, a commander we spoke with stated that, while he believes false reporting to be rare, he ensures that training for new trainees under his command includes a discussion of potential consequences of false reporting, such as legal action or separation from the Army.

The 2021 DOD-wide Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military reported that this perception is pervasive in the Army.¹⁰³ The report noted that belief in high numbers of false reports of sexual harassment and assault is a common rape myth, and is

¹⁰³Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military*.

especially concerning in the military due to significant underreporting of sexual assault.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to the perception of many servicemembers, the Army reported that in fiscal year 2020, of the 1,921 allegations of sexual assault adjudicated by the Army, only one was determined to be unfounded.¹⁰⁵

DOD SAPRO officials noted this misconception among servicemembers, stating that views about falsely reported sexual assault cases may be perpetuated by the mistaken belief that a case that is not prosecuted in court has been falsely reported—something that in reality is generally due to insufficient evidence. These officials stated that they try to ensure senior leader training includes a discussion of this distinction, but noted that these perceptions persist among less senior servicemembers.

- **Perceptions about being delayed at a current military post or assignment may deter servicemembers from reporting.** We spoke with Army SHARP personnel and commanders who told us that some servicemembers may choose not to report harassment or assault because of a fear that they will be delayed in their current posting while the report is investigated. For example, SHARP personnel and commanders at a training installation in our review stated that trainees have expressed concerns about being held back in basic training while a report of sexual harassment or assault is investigated. Similarly, a SHARP official at an installation in Korea cited concerns about being delayed at that overseas posting during the investigation of a report of sexual harassment or assault as a reporting barrier. Some of these officials clarified that victims would not actually be delayed in these situations as a result of reporting, and cited the need for increased education to address these concerns.

Although the Army has taken some steps to identify and address barriers that prevent servicemembers from reporting, as previously discussed, the persistent gap between estimated and reported incidents indicates additional efforts are needed. Specifically, according to DOD estimates

¹⁰⁴The perception that false reports of sexual assault are prevalent is a common myth about sexual assault and can contribute to victims choosing not to report. National Sexual Violence Resource Center, *False Reporting* (Enola, PA: 2012).

¹⁰⁵A sexual assault allegation is considered unfounded when a commander declines to take action on a case after a legal review of the matter indicates that the allegations against the accused were determined to be false or baseless. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal year 2020* (May 6, 2021).

and data for fiscal year 2018, the prevalence of sexual assault in the Army was almost three times higher than the number of reported incidents, and the prevalence of sexual harassment was almost 50 times higher than reported incidents.¹⁰⁶

DOD guidance states that DOD sexual assault prevention policies and programs are to encourage help-seeking and reporting, and DOD's harassment prevention strategy states that policies and reporting procedures should encourage reporting, among other things.¹⁰⁷ Further, DOD's *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023* directs the military services to develop and execute methods to address negative perceptions and other barriers to engagement in sexual assault prevention activities.¹⁰⁸ However, the Army is not prepared to comprehensively mitigate reporting barriers because it has not conducted a systematic assessment to identify the range of barriers that may prevent its servicemembers from reporting when they have been sexually harassed or assaulted, according to SHARP Program Office officials.

Without systematically identifying barriers to sexual harassment and assault reporting within the Army and developing a plan to mitigate those barriers, the Army is unable to identify and effectively address the reasons for the large gap between the prevalence of such incidents and reports received. As a result, the Army may miss opportunities to encourage reporting, better serve victims, and hold offenders accountable.

Conclusions

Incidents of sexual harassment and assault in the military have generated congressional and media attention for nearly 2 decades. Despite this attention, as well as a number of internal and external reviews of DOD's and the Army's efforts in this area, significant challenges remain. These

¹⁰⁶U.S. Army, *Fiscal Year 2020 Active Component and U.S. Army Reserve Annual Report on Sexual Assault* (May 6, 2021).

¹⁰⁷DOD Instruction 6400.09 and Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Harassment Prevention Strategy for the Armed Forces Fiscal Years 2021-2026* (May 2021).

¹⁰⁸DOD, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023*.

challenges include structural flaws within the program and significant under-reporting of incidents of sexual harassment and assault.

The SHARP program faces challenges in three key areas: policy implementation, oversight, and visibility into reporting barriers. While the Army has implemented policies to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault, its policy is disjointed, unclear, and not aligned with DOD policy in some areas. The Army's disjointed and unclear policy, which resides across multiple different documents, creates confusion for commanders and SHARP personnel. Moreover, Army policies' lack of alignment with DOD policies in some areas may result in inconsistent handling of such cases. In addition, some SARCs lack direct and unimpeded access to commanders, which may limit commander awareness of issues related to sexual harassment and assault within their command and jeopardize victim privacy. Further, commanders may be unaware of existing resources to assist them in implementing their SHARP programs, hindering their usefulness and potentially resulting in varied case outcomes for victims across the Army.

Additionally, the SHARP Program Office's ability to conduct oversight of program implementation at the installation and command levels is limited by several challenges. For example, the SHARP Program Office lacks visibility over program funding and staffing at the command level, and does not track all disclosed incidents of sexual assault, limiting visibility. Further, the SHARP Program Office, as currently structured, lacks authority to hold commanders accountable and struggles to conduct oversight activities among competing priorities due to a limited workforce. Moreover, the Army does not know whether the SHARP program is effective. While the Army tracks some trend data related to sexual harassment and assault, the SHARP program lacks fully-developed performance measures and the Army has not developed and implemented a continuous evaluation plan to evaluate the program's effectiveness. Without fully developing performance measures and systematically evaluating effectiveness, the Army does not know whether its efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and assault are succeeding, and cannot adjust its approach when needed to better achieve its goals.

Finally, the Army has not systematically assessed barriers that prevent its servicemembers from reporting sexual harassment and assault, despite a persistent large gap between the prevalence and reporting of such incidents. As a result, the Army lacks visibility into the full range of barriers specific to servicemembers, such as some SHARP personnel

having limited relevant experience and not being suited to effectively caring for victims. Without taking steps to systematically assess barriers to reporting, the Army is unable to identify and target efforts to address the reasons servicemembers choose not to report sexual harassment and assault. It may also be missing opportunities to encourage reporting, thereby better serving victims and ensuring offenders are held accountable.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making a total of nine recommendations to the Secretary of the Army. Specifically:

The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program expedites and establishes a timeline for the issuance of a SHARP regulation that consolidates the various policies, to include clarified procedures for managing sexual harassment complaints. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program conducts a review of the consolidated SHARP regulation prior to issuance to ensure that it aligns with DOD policies for sexual harassment and assault prevention and response. (Recommendation 2)

The Secretary of the Army should establish a mechanism to ensure that Sexual Assault Response Coordinators have direct and unimpeded access to the installation commander, as well as the immediate commander of both the servicemember victim and alleged servicemember offender, without going through layers in the chain of command. This could be accomplished by, for example, providing Sexual Assault Response Coordinators with the requisite designation or categorization needed to facilitate direct communication with their commander. (Recommendation 3)

The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program publishes or directly links all relevant resources to assist commanders in implementing their SHARP programs in a single, easily accessible location, such as the SHARP Learning Portal, and comprehensively publicizes the list to commanders so that existing resources are readily available and easily accessible when needed. (Recommendation 4)

The Secretary of the Army should design an oversight structure in accordance with existing DOD guidance for implementation of recommendations stemming from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military. The oversight structure should also: (1) include a mechanism for comprehensive oversight of SHARP programs at the installation and command level, to include visibility over all areas of program implementation, such as inspection results, funding, and staffing; (2) direct that the SHARP Program Office is structured so as to enforce commander accountability for program implementation; and (3) ensure that the SHARP Program Office has adequate personnel resources to carry out its oversight responsibilities. (Recommendation 5)

The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program issues guidance to ensure that incidents of sexual assault that are not officially reported but are disclosed to SHARP personnel and medical providers without access to the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID) are shared with a brigade-level SARC and documented in the SAPR Related Inquiry module in DSAID. (Recommendation 6)

The Secretary of the Army should develop a suite of performance measures that measure the desired outcomes for the SHARP program and, at a minimum, are clearly defined, objective, balanced, and enable consistent tracking of program performance over time. (Recommendation 7)

The Secretary of the Army should develop and implement a continuous evaluation plan that employs a suite of fully-developed performance measures to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program. The plan should include ensuring that there are sufficient personnel with the relevant competencies, skills, and knowledge needed to implement the plan. (Recommendation 8)

The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program conducts a systematic assessment to identify barriers to sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting and develops a plan to mitigate identified barriers and encourage reporting. Such barriers may include concerns related to the staffing structure of the SHARP program and perceptions about the prevalence of false reporting. (Recommendation 9)

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to DOD for review and comment. In written comments reproduced in appendix IV, the Army, on behalf of DOD, concurred with all nine recommendations and described current and planned steps to address them. However, as discussed below, some of the steps the Army described as having been taken or in the process of being taken to address two of the recommendations do not fully address our recommendations. DOD also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

In the written comments, the Army described steps taken to address recommendation 3—to establish a mechanism to ensure that Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) have direct and unimpeded access to the installation commander, as well as the immediate commander of both the servicemember victim and alleged servicemember offender, without going through layers in the chain of command. Specifically, the Army cited Army Execute Order 126-22, stating that it reiterates DOD guidance directing commanders to provide immediate and unimpeded access to all SARCs. However, Execute Order 126-22 does not direct commanders to provide such access to all SARCs.

Further, the Army stated that Execute Order 126-22 directs that lead SARCs be designated as special staff to facilitate the identification of and responses to programmatic issues, including lack of direct access to commanders by SARCs. As discussed earlier in this report, a 2019 Center for Army Analysis review of the SHARP program stated that all SHARP personnel should be categorized as special staff to enhance access to commanders, but we found that this change has not been implemented.¹⁰⁹ Further, while the order directs that the lead SARC be supervised by the senior commander or deputy commander, it does not specify that SARCs be designated as special staff. As a result, Execute Order 126-22 does not ensure that all SARCs have direct and unimpeded access to the installation commander, or to the immediate commanders of servicemember victims and alleged offenders, as we recommended. We believe our recommendation is still valid and the Army should take additional steps to address it. We will monitor the Army's steps to address

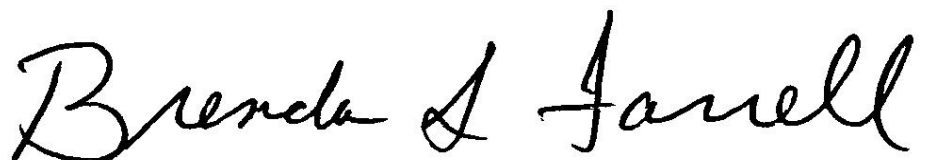
¹⁰⁹Center for Army Analysis, *Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program Review* (Fort Belvoir, VA: Apr. 2019).

this recommendation as part of our standard recommendation follow-up process.

The Army also described steps taken to address recommendation 4—to publish or directly link all relevant resources to assist commanders in implementing their SHARP programs in a single, easily accessible location, and to comprehensively publicize the list to commanders. Specifically, the Army stated that it added a “Commanders Resources” section to the SHARP website, containing links to relevant resources. However, the section does not contain direct links to some relevant resources discussed earlier in this report, including associated policy documents and a DOD guide for commanders on selecting SARCs and VAs. Further, the Army cited additional resources it has developed, including awareness materials with the latest SHARP messaging, monthly senior leader executive summaries, and fact sheets about DOD policy changes, but these were not linked on the website. We agree that the Army has taken some steps to address this recommendation but it is important that all relevant resources be accessible and comprehensively publicized. We will monitor the Army’s efforts to fully address this recommendation as part of our standard recommendation follow-up process.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Army. In addition, this report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or members of your staff have any questions regarding this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made significant contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.



Brenda S. Farrell
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey Questions Administered and Survey Results

To inform our assessment of the Army's implementation, oversight, and assessment of the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program, we conducted a web-based survey of current and recent SHARP personnel. Specifically, we surveyed a stratified random sample of current and recent SHARP personnel who received initial or renewed certification to hold a SHARP position between May 2019 and February 2021. To select our survey sample, we stratified the population by two variables: affiliation status (Army Active Duty/ Civilian) and position (Program Manager (PM), Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), or Victim Advocate (VA)).

The overall unweighted response rate for our survey of current and former SHARP personnel was 41 percent. However, response rates varied across the strata of our survey design, necessitating the use of a weighted survey response rate of 31 percent. Also, not every individual responded to every question due to survey logic and question non-response. All survey results presented in this appendix are generalizable to the population of current and recent SHARP personnel, except where otherwise noted. Because our estimates are from a generalizable sample, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular estimates as 95 percent confidence intervals.

Our survey was comprised of closed- and open-ended questions. In this appendix, we do not provide information on responses to the open-ended questions to help preserve the confidentiality of respondents. For a more detailed discussion of our survey scope and methodology, see appendix II.

Background

Table 4: Are you a military member or civilian employee? (Question 1)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Military member	88.8	85.6	91.4
Civilian employee	11.2	8.6	14.4

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 5: Are you currently serving as a SHARP program manager (PM), sexual assault response coordinator (SARC), or victim advocate (VA)? (Question 2)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Program Manager (PM)	1.3	0.5	2.8
Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC)	20.0	14.7	25.3
Victim Advocate (VA)	49.3	41.6	56.9
Other	1.7	0.5	4.1
I am not currently serving in a SHARP position	27.7	20.6	34.8

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Respondents could only check one response in question 2. If they served as more than one of these roles, they were instructed to select the one that best represents their primary role.

Table 6: In what SHARP position did you serve most recently? (Question 3)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Program Manager (PM)	0.2	0.0	7.9
Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC)	8.4	3.0	17.7
Victim Advocate (VA)	87.6	77.1	94.5
Other	3.8	0.4	14.0

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 3 was only asked for those that answered “I am not currently serving in a SHARP position” to question 2.

Table 7: For about how many years have you been in your current or most recent SHARP position? (Question 4)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Less than 1 year	18.6	12.9	25.6
1 year to less than 2 years	44.2	36.5	52.0
2 years to less than 3 years	21.9	15.8	29.0
3 years to less than 4 years	7.6	4.1	12.6
4 years to less than 5 years	1.5	0.4	4.0
5 years or more	6.2	4.1	8.9

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 8: Which of the following best describes your employment and duties in your current or most recent SHARP position? (Question 5)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Full-time; SHARP position as sole or primary duty	20.2	15.1	25.2
Part-time; SHARP position as sole or primary duty	5.1	2.1	10.2
Part-time; SHARP position as collateral duty among multiple responsibilities	74.7	68.8	80.7

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 9: Approximately how many active duty Army servicemembers does your SHARP program support? (Question 6)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
1,000 or fewer	63.4	55.9	70.9
1,001-2,500	20.6	14.4	28.0
2,501-5,000	10.1	6.1	15.6
Greater than 5,000	5.9	3.4	9.5

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 10: If you are aware, how many full- and part-time PMs, SARCs, and VAs support your command? (Question 7)

Response	Mean	Median
PM	2.1	1
SARC	38.4	22.5
VA	53.8	36.5

Legend: PM = Program Manager; SARC = Sexual Assault Response Coordinator; VA = Victim Advocate

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: These numbers are unweighted and apply only to those PMs who responded to this question. Response was not sufficient to produce statistically reliable population estimates for this question.

General Questions about the SHARP Program

Table 11: How effective is the headquarters-level Army SHARP Program Office at each of the following? (Question 8)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Ensuring Army policy and strategy align with DOD policy	Very effective	39.9	34.3	45.5
	Moderately effective	31.3	26.1	36.4
	Slightly effective	17.1	12.6	22.4
	Not very effective	3.3	1.4	6.3
	Not at all effective	3.9	1.9	7.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.5	2.3	7.9
Establishing procedures for reporting, investigation, and victim support	Very effective	42.2	36.7	47.8
	Moderately effective	32.6	27.4	37.8
	Slightly effective	19.1	14.7	23.5
	Not very effective	2.9	1.2	5.9
	Not at all effective	1.3	0.3	3.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.9	0.6	4.5
Establishing selection criteria for SHARP personnel	Very effective	35.9	30.5	41.3
	Moderately effective	28.3	23.3	33.3
	Slightly effective	13.1	9.1	18.0
	Not very effective	12.7	8.8	17.6
	Not at all effective	6.5	3.7	10.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.5	1.6	6.7

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
Questions Administered and Survey Results**

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Ensuring personnel have completed and maintained all required training and certification	Very effective	43.9	38.4	49.5
	Moderately effective	31.1	25.9	36.3
	Slightly effective	12.6	8.7	17.4
	Not very effective	5.4	2.9	9.0
	Not at all effective	3.5	1.6	6.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.5	1.6	6.6
Managing and maintaining the SHARP Organizational Inspection Program	Very effective	33.1	27.8	38.4
	Moderately effective	31.5	26.3	36.8
	Slightly effective	21.7	17.1	26.4
	Not very effective	4.6	2.4	8.1
	Not at all effective	3.5	1.6	6.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.5	3.0	9.2
Maintaining the annual SHARP Awards	Very effective	21.9	17.1	26.7
	Moderately effective	19.4	15.2	23.7
	Slightly effective	17.9	13.3	23.3
	Not very effective	9.7	6.3	14.1
	Not at all effective	6.7	3.9	10.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	24.4	19.6	29.2
Identifying fiscal needs for the SHARP program	Very effective	22.4	17.6	27.3
	Moderately effective	19.0	14.2	24.5
	Slightly effective	18.5	13.8	24.0
	Not very effective	17.5	12.9	22.9
	Not at all effective	13.4	9.4	18.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	9.2	5.9	13.6
Identifying personnel needs for the SHARP program	Very effective	23.9	18.9	28.9
	Moderately effective	18.3	13.6	23.7
	Slightly effective	18.4	13.7	23.8
	Not very effective	18.2	13.5	23.6
	Not at all effective	17.0	12.5	22.3
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.3	2.1	7.7
	Very effective	37.7	32.2	43.2
	Moderately effective	23.2	18.6	27.8
	Slightly effective	20.8	16.3	25.2

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Monitoring sexual harassment/assault and associated retaliatory behavior data, trends, and SHARP performance	Not very effective	4.9	2.5	8.4
	Not at all effective	5.2	2.7	8.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	8.3	5.1	12.5
Approving and monitoring Sexual Harassment Integrated Case Reporting System (ICRS) and DSAID access	Very effective	40.7	35.2	46.2
	Moderately effective	24.0	19.3	28.8
	Slightly effective	10.5	6.9	15.0
	Not very effective	2.2	0.8	4.9
	Not at all effective	4.4	2.2	7.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	18.2	13.5	23.6
Maintaining SHARP ICRS and DSAID Help Desks to assist Army users	Very effective	42.3	36.7	47.8
	Moderately effective	23.6	18.9	28.3
	Slightly effective	7.3	4.4	11.4
	Not very effective	3.6	1.6	6.7
	Not at all effective	2.7	1.1	5.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	20.5	15.9	25.1
Publicizing the DOD Safe Helpline	Very effective	70.7	65.6	75.9
	Moderately effective	17.6	13.0	23.0
	Slightly effective	6.4	3.7	10.3
	Not very effective	1.9	0.6	4.5
	Not at all effective	1.5	0.4	4.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.9	0.6	4.5

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention; DOD = Department of Defense; DSAID = Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 8 was only asked of Program Managers and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators.

Table 12: Considering your responses to the previous question, how effective is the headquarters-level Army SHARP Program Office at overseeing the SHARP Program? (Question 9)

Numbers in percentage

Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Very effective	28.1	22.9	33.2
Moderately effective	36.4	31.0	41.7
Slightly effective	19.0	14.8	23.2
Not very effective	9.3	6.0	13.7
Not at all effective	2.7	1.1	5.7
No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.5	2.3	7.9

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 9 was only asked of Program Managers and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators.

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
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Table 13: How effective do you believe your command is at each of the following? (Question 10)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Ensuring victims and complainants have access to a well-coordinated, highly-responsive SHARP program	Very effective	65.4	58.1	72.7
	Moderately effective	25.8	19.0	32.6
	Slightly effective	6.1	2.9	10.9
	Not very effective	0.4	0.0	1.4
	Not at all effective	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	2.2	0.6	5.6
Issuing policy memos, including the command's commitment to SHARP	Very effective	69.1	62.0	76.2
	Moderately effective	22.9	16.7	30.1
	Slightly effective	3.0	1.2	6.1
	Not very effective	3.6	1.2	8.0
	Not at all effective	0.2	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.2	0.2	4.0
Ensuring SHARP policy memos and victim resources are posted on unit bulletin boards	Very effective	68.6	61.5	75.7
	Moderately effective	23.7	17.1	30.3
	Slightly effective	5.1	2.3	9.6
	Not very effective	1.3	0.2	4.0
	Not at all effective	0.2	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.1	0.1	4.0
Ensuring all personnel receive required SHARP training, including annual training and pre- and post-deployment training	Very effective	64.1	56.8	71.5
	Moderately effective	26.7	20.0	33.5
	Slightly effective	5.5	2.6	10.0
	Not very effective	1.3	0.2	4.0
	Not at all effective	1.2	0.2	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.2	0.2	4.0
Conducting periodic assessments of the command's SHARP program for program improvement	Very effective	47.3	39.6	55.0
	Moderately effective	33.0	25.7	40.3
	Slightly effective	11.7	7.3	17.6
	Not very effective	4.2	1.7	8.4
	Not at all effective	0.4	0.0	1.5
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.4	1.2	7.2

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Questions Administered and Survey Results**

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Ensuring all SHARP personnel under their command are appropriately screened, trained, and certified	Very effective	64.5	57.2	71.9
	Moderately effective	23.1	16.8	30.3
	Slightly effective	7.0	3.6	12.1
	Not very effective	3.6	1.2	8.0
	Not at all effective	0.4	0.0	1.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.4	0.3	4.0
Monitoring the command climate with respect to SHARP	Very effective	55.1	47.4	62.7
	Moderately effective	31.4	24.2	38.6
	Slightly effective	9.5	5.5	14.9
	Not very effective	1.6	0.5	4.0
	Not at all effective	0.4	0.1	1.5
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	2.0	0.4	5.5
Maintaining and publicizing the local installation 24/7 SHARP hotline (apart from the DOD-wide Safe Helpline)	Very effective	74.9	68.2	81.7
	Moderately effective	17.7	12.1	24.7
	Slightly effective	4.5	1.9	8.6
	Not very effective	1.8	0.3	5.5
	Not at all effective	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.0	0.1	4.0
Ensuring SHARP personnel have the resources they need to accomplish assigned tasks	Very effective	50.8	43.1	58.5
	Moderately effective	31.9	24.6	39.2
	Slightly effective	11.0	6.8	16.6
	Not very effective	3.5	1.4	7.2
	Not at all effective	0.9	0.3	2.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.9	0.4	5.5
Establishing and enforcing procedures to protect servicemembers and SHARP personnel from all forms of retaliation	Very effective	58.8	51.2	66.4
	Moderately effective	30.8	23.5	38.0
	Slightly effective	5.0	2.4	9.0
	Not very effective	0.6	0.1	1.7
	Not at all effective	0.6	0.1	1.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.3	1.8	8.5

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Supporting investigations through ensuring they are impartial and timely	Very effective	60.5	53.0	67.9
	Moderately effective	25.6	18.8	32.3
	Slightly effective	3.7	1.5	7.4
	Not very effective	1.7	0.5	4.1
	Not at all effective	0.4	0.0	1.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	8.2	4.5	13.5

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention; DOD = Department of Defense

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 14: Considering your responses to the previous question, how effective is your command at overseeing the SHARP Program? (Question 11)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Very effective	57.5	52.1	63.0
Moderately effective	30.0	25.0	35.0
Slightly effective	7.1	4.2	11.1
Not very effective	2.6	1.0	5.4
Not at all effective	0.9	0.1	3.1
No basis to judge/Not applicable	1.9	0.6	4.5

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 11 was only asked of Program Managers and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators.

Table 15: Are the command climate survey results related to sexual harassment/assault issues for units in your command typically shared with you? (Question 12)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
All results are shared	37.3	29.9	44.7
Most results are shared, but some are not	12.4	7.9	18.3
Some results are shared, but most are not	16.7	11.2	23.5
No results are shared	33.6	26.1	41.0

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 16: To what extent are command climate survey results used to identify and address any sexual harassment/assault related issues in your command? (Question 13)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound (percentage)	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound (percentage)
Very large extent	17.6	12.3	23.9
Large extent	22.0	15.9	29.1
Moderate extent	14.9	9.9	21.2
Small extent	9.9	5.7	15.6
Not at all	3.0	1.0	7.0
No basis to judge/Not applicable	32.6	25.2	40.1

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 17: Which one of the following best describes how you typically communicate, if at all, with senior leaders in your command about sexual harassment/assault issues? (Question 14)

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
I meet directly with senior leaders to discuss sexual harassment/assault issues	61.9	54.3	69.5
There are two or more layers of officers or officials between me and discussion with senior leaders	21.7	15.4	29.0
I do not communicate with senior leaders about sexual harassment/assault issues	16.4	10.9	23.4

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 18: How would you assess the level of support by senior leaders in your command for the SHARP program overall? (Question 15)

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Very supportive	68.0	60.8	75.2
Moderately supportive	18.4	12.8	25.3
Slightly supportive	2.8	1.1	6.0
Not very supportive	1.1	0.1	4.0
Not at all supportive	1.0	0.1	4.1
Varies depending on the leader	2.2	0.6	5.7
No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.4	3.0	11.7

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Table 19: Do you assess the effectiveness of the SHARP program in your command? (Question 16)

Numbers in percentage

Response	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	56.8	49.1	64.4
No	25.5	18.8	32.3
Unsure	17.7	12.0	24.7

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Questions Specific to Sexual Harassment

Table 20: If you are aware, how many total complaints—formal and informal—of sexual harassment were filed by servicemembers in units in your command in fiscal year 2020? (Question 17)

Response	Estimated mean	Estimated median
Formal	20	18
Informal	44	6

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 17 was only asked of Program Managers. Respondents were instructed to estimate the number to the best of their ability if the information was not readily available.

Table 21: About how many servicemembers have you personally worked with on formal and informal complaints of sexual harassment in the last 12 months? (Question 18)

Estimated mean	Lower 95% limit mean	Upper 95% limit mean
4.59	3.90	5.28

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 18 was only asked of Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates. Respondents were instructed to estimate the number to the best of their ability if the information was not readily available.

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Table 22: How would you assess the expected level of support by senior leaders in your command for each of the following? (Question 19)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Assisting victims of sexual harassment	Very supportive	72.1	65.3	78.9
	Moderately supportive	12.5	7.9	18.5
	Slightly supportive	4.4	1.9	8.6
	Not very supportive	0.3	0.0	1.2
	Not at all supportive	0.1	0.0	1.1
	Varies depending on leader	0.2	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	10.3	6.0	16.3
Pursuing investigation of sexual harassment when allegation is against another senior officer	Very supportive	64.9	57.7	72.2
	Moderately supportive	11.3	6.9	17.1
	Slightly supportive	2.0	0.8	4.3
	Not very supportive	1.3	0.3	4.0
	Not at all supportive	1.0	0.1	4.0
	Varies depending on leader	1.1	0.2	3.9
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	18.3	12.6	25.3
Pursuing investigation of sexual harassment when allegation is against a lower ranking servicemember	Very supportive	71.4	64.5	78.3
	Moderately supportive	12.3	7.7	18.3
	Slightly supportive	1.3	0.2	3.9
	Not very supportive	0.3	0.0	1.3
	Not at all supportive	0.1	0.0	1.1
	Varies depending on leader	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	14.5	9.4	21.0

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Encouraging members to challenge sexual harassment	Very supportive	68.0	60.9	75.1
	Moderately supportive	10.0	6.1	15.4
	Slightly supportive	4.2	1.7	8.4
	Not very supportive	2.1	0.5	5.6
	Not at all supportive	1.0	0.1	4.0
	Varies depending on leader	0.3	0.0	1.3
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	14.3	9.2	20.8
Encouraging members to report situations or behaviors that could result in sexual harassment	Very supportive	70.1	63.0	77.1
	Moderately supportive	14.1	9.2	20.4
	Slightly supportive	4.0	1.5	8.2
	Not very supportive	1.2	0.2	3.9
	Not at all supportive	0.2	0.0	1.2
	Varies depending on leader	1.0	0.1	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	9.4	5.3	15.1

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

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Table 23: How effective do you believe the SHARP program in your command is at each of the following? (Question 20)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Preventing sexual harassment	Very effective	49.4	41.7	57.1
	Moderately effective	29.6	22.7	36.5
	Slightly effective	12.6	8.0	18.6
	Not very effective	3.2	1.1	7.1
	Not at all effective	0.4	0.0	1.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.8	2.1	9.5
Responding to complaints of sexual harassment	Very effective	69.0	61.9	76.0
	Moderately effective	18.3	12.8	25.1
	Slightly effective	5.2	2.4	9.8
	Not very effective	0.3	0.0	1.2
	Not at all effective	0.2	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.0	3.6	12.0
Protecting victims' privacy when handling cases	Very effective	66.7	59.6	73.8
	Moderately effective	17.3	11.9	23.8
	Slightly effective	5.8	2.9	10.2
	Not very effective	3.0	0.9	6.9
	Not at all effective	0.2	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.0	3.6	12.1
Conducting outreach and/or prevention activities	Very effective	53.5	45.9	61.2
	Moderately effective	23.1	16.9	30.3
	Slightly effective	10.7	6.7	16.0
	Not very effective	4.3	1.8	8.5
	Not at all effective	0.5	0.1	1.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.9	4.2	13.2

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

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Table 24: Based on your experience, how likely is each of the following in your command? (Question 21)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Servicemembers would recognize sexual harassment if they witnessed an incident	Very likely	57.9	50.4	65.4
	Likely	29.9	23.1	36.8
	Unsure	6.7	3.3	11.8
	Unlikely	2.2	0.6	5.6
	Very unlikely	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.2	1.1	7.0
Servicemembers would intervene if they witnessed sexual harassment taking place	Very likely	40.1	32.4	47.8
	Likely	36.5	29.1	43.9
	Unsure	11.7	7.6	17.0
	Unlikely	7.3	3.8	12.4
	Very unlikely	0.3	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.1	1.7	8.4
Servicemembers would know how to report an incident of sexual harassment	Very likely	51.5	43.8	59.2
	Likely	35.2	27.9	42.5
	Unsure	6.2	3.0	11.1
	Unlikely	3.8	1.4	8.3
	Very unlikely	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.2	1.1	7.1
Servicemembers would report sexual harassment to SHARP if it happened to them	Very likely	40.3	32.7	47.9
	Likely	34.8	27.6	42.1
	Unsure	17.2	11.8	23.9
	Unlikely	3.3	1.2	7.1
	Very unlikely	0.2	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.1	1.6	8.3

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

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Table 25: In your experience, how confident are servicemembers in your command of each of the following? (Question 22)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
They will be treated with dignity and respect by personnel handling their complaint of sexual harassment	Very confident	65.9	58.6	73.2
	Moderately confident	25.5	18.7	32.3
	Slightly confident	2.0	0.8	4.3
	Not very confident	1.4	0.3	4.0
	Not at all confident	0.1	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.0	2.2	9.6
Complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously by leader(s) in your command	Very confident	68.3	61.2	75.3
	Moderately confident	23.0	16.8	30.3
	Slightly confident	2.0	0.7	4.2
	Not very confident	1.7	0.5	4.1
	Not at all confident	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.0	2.2	9.6
They will be able to access victim support resources	Very confident	75.6	69.1	82.1
	Moderately confident	16.2	10.9	22.7
	Slightly confident	1.1	0.3	2.4
	Not very confident	1.2	0.2	4.0
	Not at all confident	0.1	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.9	2.8	10.7
They will receive regular updates about the progress of their complaint	Very confident	69.3	62.3	76.2
	Moderately confident	16.7	11.5	23.1
	Slightly confident	5.5	2.6	10.0
	Not very confident	1.5	0.4	4.1
	Not at all confident	0.1	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.9	3.5	12.0
Their privacy will be protected	Very confident	66.5	59.4	73.7
	Moderately confident	16.0	11.0	22.2
	Slightly confident	8.1	4.4	13.4
	Not very confident	2.5	0.8	5.7
	Not at all confident	0.3	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.7	3.3	11.8

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
They will not be treated differently by their supervisor or chain of command for reporting	Very confident	60.4	52.9	67.8
	Moderately confident	23.8	17.2	30.3
	Slightly confident	6.0	3.3	9.9
	Not very confident	2.8	1.0	5.9
	Not at all confident	0.4	0.0	1.5
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.7	3.3	11.9
They will not be treated differently by other members of their unit for reporting	Very confident	56.1	48.5	63.7
	Moderately confident	22.9	16.7	30.1
	Slightly confident	10.0	6.1	15.1
	Not very confident	4.6	2.3	8.2
	Not at all confident	0.4	0.0	1.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.0	2.9	10.9
They will not be retaliated against for reporting	Very confident	60.4	53.0	67.9
	Moderately confident	25.1	18.5	31.8
	Slightly confident	5.1	2.4	9.1
	Not very confident	3.0	1.2	6.1
	Not at all confident	0.5	0.1	1.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.8	2.7	10.7
Their complaint will be resolved quickly	Very confident	53.3	45.7	61.0
	Moderately confident	23.2	16.9	29.5
	Slightly confident	12.4	7.8	18.5
	Not very confident	5.4	2.5	9.9
	Not at all confident	0.6	0.1	1.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.1	2.3	9.7
Alleged offender(s) will be held accountable	Very confident	56.6	49.0	64.2
	Moderately confident	20.7	14.8	27.7
	Slightly confident	12.0	7.6	17.9
	Not very confident	4.2	2.0	7.8
	Not at all confident	0.6	0.1	1.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.8	2.7	10.7

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
The reporting process overall is effective	Very confident	58.3	50.8	65.9
	Moderately confident	23.7	17.2	30.2
	Slightly confident	9.1	5.3	14.3
	Not very confident	2.6	0.9	5.8
	Not at all confident	1.2	0.2	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	5.0	2.2	9.6

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

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Table 26: With regard to addressing sexual harassment, how much of a challenge, if at all, are each of the following? (Question 23)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Funding for adequate staff for preventing sexual harassment	Very challenging	16.5	11.4	22.7
	Moderately challenging	14.1	9.1	20.4
	Slightly challenging	13.6	8.8	19.8
	Not very challenging	11.9	7.3	18.0
	Not at all challenging	10.9	6.7	16.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	33.0	25.5	40.4
Funding for adequate staff for responding to sexual harassment	Very challenging	15.8	10.7	22.0
	Moderately challenging	14.9	9.7	21.4
	Slightly challenging	13.0	8.4	19.0
	Not very challenging	10.5	6.3	16.2
	Not at all challenging	12.9	8.2	18.9
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	33.0	25.6	40.4
Funding for adequate resources for preventing sexual harassment	Very challenging	14.0	9.4	19.7
	Moderately challenging	15.3	10.1	21.9
	Slightly challenging	13.4	8.7	19.4
	Not very challenging	12.0	7.4	18.1
	Not at all challenging	14.3	9.3	20.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	31.0	23.6	38.4
Funding for adequate resources for responding to sexual harassment	Very challenging	12.7	8.2	18.4
	Moderately challenging	12.3	7.7	18.3
	Slightly challenging	13.8	8.8	20.1
	Not very challenging	13.6	8.6	19.9
	Not at all challenging	16.9	11.4	23.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	30.8	23.4	38.2
Availability of community resources outside the installation (e.g., crisis centers)	Very challenging	8.9	5.3	13.8
	Moderately challenging	12.2	7.6	18.2
	Slightly challenging	12.9	8.1	19.1
	Not very challenging	16.4	11.1	23.0
	Not at all challenging	24.6	18.0	31.3
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	25.0	18.1	31.9

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Clear guidance for preventing sexual harassment	Very challenging	8.4	4.7	13.7
	Moderately challenging	7.5	4.1	12.5
	Slightly challenging	9.1	5.4	14.3
	Not very challenging	23.0	16.7	30.2
	Not at all challenging	44.1	36.5	51.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.8	4.0	13.5
Clear guidance for responding to sexual harassment	Very challenging	7.2	3.8	12.3
	Moderately challenging	9.9	5.7	15.6
	Slightly challenging	10.3	6.3	15.7
	Not very challenging	20.5	14.6	27.5
	Not at all challenging	45.1	37.4	52.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.1	3.5	12.6
Continuing education opportunities	Very challenging	10.7	6.5	16.4
	Moderately challenging	14.5	9.4	21.0
	Slightly challenging	17.4	11.9	24.1
	Not very challenging	14.2	9.3	20.3
	Not at all challenging	35.7	28.3	43.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.5	3.8	12.9
Victim concerns about confidentiality	Very challenging	7.0	3.7	11.6
	Moderately challenging	9.9	5.9	15.3
	Slightly challenging	13.9	9.1	20.0
	Not very challenging	20.6	14.7	27.6
	Not at all challenging	35.6	28.1	43.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	13.1	8.1	19.7
Victim concerns about retaliation from their chain of command	Very challenging	7.9	4.4	12.8
	Moderately challenging	7.3	4.0	11.9
	Slightly challenging	13.4	8.7	19.3
	Not very challenging	18.3	12.7	25.0
	Not at all challenging	40.0	32.4	47.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	13.2	8.2	19.8

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Command support for assisting victims	Very challenging	6.1	2.9	10.9
	Moderately challenging	4.6	2.0	8.7
	Slightly challenging	9.8	5.9	15.3
	Not very challenging	16.3	11.1	22.7
	Not at all challenging	52.3	44.7	60.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	10.8	6.3	17.0

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Questions Specific to Sexual Assault

Table 27: If you are aware, how many total reports—restricted and unrestricted—of sexual assault were filed by servicemembers in units in your command in fiscal year 2020? (Question 25)

Responses	Estimated mean	Estimated median
Restricted	25	25
Unrestricted	97	52

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 25 was only asked of Program Managers. Respondents were instructed to estimate the number to the best of their ability if the information was not readily available.

Table 28: About how many servicemembers have you personally worked with on restricted and unrestricted reports of sexual assault in the last 12 months? (Question 26)

Responses	Estimated mean	Lower 95% limit mean	Upper 95% limit mean
Restricted	1.62	1.38	1.86
Unrestricted	3.87	3.06	4.69

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Note: Question 26 was only asked of Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates. Respondents were instructed to estimate the number to the best of their ability if the information was not readily available.

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Table 29: How would you assess the expected level of support by senior leaders in your command for each of the following? (Question 27)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Assisting victims of sexual assault	Very supportive	69.6	62.4	76.7
	Moderately supportive	11.9	7.3	17.9
	Slightly supportive	2.9	0.9	6.9
	Not very supportive	1.0	0.1	4.0
	Not at all supportive	0.2	0.0	1.1
	Varies depending on leader	1.0	0.1	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	13.5	8.5	20.0
Pursuing investigation of sexual assault when allegation is against another senior officer	Very supportive	57.5	49.9	65.2
	Moderately supportive	11.1	6.7	16.9
	Slightly supportive	4.1	1.6	8.3
	Not very supportive	0.3	0.0	1.3
	Not at all supportive	1.8	0.3	5.5
	Varies depending on leader	1.0	0.1	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	24.2	17.4	30.9
Pursuing investigation of sexual assault when allegation is against a lower ranking servicemember	Very supportive	64.3	56.9	71.8
	Moderately supportive	11.7	7.2	17.8
	Slightly supportive	4.6	1.9	9.3
	Not very supportive	0.1	0.0	1.2
	Not at all supportive	0.9	0.0	4.1
	Varies depending on leader	0.9	0.0	4.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	17.4	11.8	24.4
Encouraging members to challenge sexual assault	Very supportive	65.3	58.0	72.7
	Moderately supportive	14.6	9.5	21.1
	Slightly supportive	4.0	1.6	8.3
	Not very supportive	0.3	0.0	1.2
	Not at all supportive	0.1	0.0	1.2
	Varies depending on leader	1.1	0.1	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	14.5	9.4	21.0

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Encouraging members to report situations or behaviors that could result in sexual assault	Very supportive	68.8	61.6	76.0
	Moderately supportive	13.0	8.3	19.2
	Slightly supportive	4.3	1.8	8.5
	Not very supportive	0.2	0.0	1.1
	Not at all supportive	0.1	0.0	1.1
	Varies depending on leader	0.9	0.1	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	12.6	7.8	19.0

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

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Table 30: How effective do you believe the SHARP program in your command is at each of the following? (Question 28)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Preventing sexual assault	Very effective	51.3	43.6	59.0
	Moderately effective	28.3	21.4	35.3
	Slightly effective	10.4	6.3	16.1
	Not very effective	1.9	0.6	4.2
	Not at all effective	0.5	0.1	1.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.6	3.9	12.9
Responding to reports of sexual assault	Very effective	68.6	61.5	75.8
	Moderately effective	18.4	12.7	25.3
	Slightly effective	2.9	0.9	6.9
	Not very effective	0.5	0.1	1.5
	Not at all effective	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	9.5	5.4	15.2
Providing support services for victims of sexual assault	Very effective	72.2	65.3	79.1
	Moderately effective	14.0	9.1	20.3
	Slightly effective	4.7	1.9	9.3
	Not very effective	0.4	0.1	1.5
	Not at all effective	0.1	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	8.7	4.8	14.2
Protecting sexual assault victims' safety when handling cases	Very effective	69.5	62.4	76.6
	Moderately effective	13.9	8.9	20.2
	Slightly effective	4.5	1.8	9.2
	Not very effective	0.5	0.1	1.5
	Not at all effective	0.2	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	11.5	6.9	17.5
Protecting sexual assault victims' privacy when handling cases	Very effective	67.6	60.4	74.7
	Moderately effective	16.3	11.0	22.8
	Slightly effective	5.1	2.3	9.6
	Not very effective	0.4	0.0	1.4
	Not at all effective	0.2	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	10.5	6.1	16.4

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

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Table 31: Based on your experience, how likely is each of the following in your command? (Question 29)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Servicemembers would recognize sexual assault if they witnessed an incident	Very likely	63.5	56.2	70.9
	Likely	28.3	21.4	35.1
	Unsure	4.2	1.7	8.4
	Unlikely	0.1	0.0	1.1
	Very unlikely	0.0	0.0	0.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.9	1.5	8.2
Servicemembers would intervene if they witnessed sexual assault taking place	Very likely	45.5	37.8	53.2
	Likely	34.3	27.1	41.5
	Unsure	13.7	8.9	19.8
	Unlikely	2.4	0.8	5.7
	Very unlikely	0.2	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.9	1.5	8.2
Servicemembers would know how to file a restricted report of sexual assault	Very likely	50.0	42.4	57.7
	Likely	33.3	26.3	40.4
	Unsure	8.7	4.8	14.2
	Unlikely	3.7	1.3	8.1
	Very unlikely	0.2	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.1	1.6	8.3
Servicemembers would know how to file an unrestricted report of sexual assault	Very likely	53.6	46.0	61.3
	Likely	30.2	23.4	37.1
	Unsure	8.4	4.5	14.0
	Unlikely	3.4	1.1	7.9
	Very unlikely	0.3	0.0	1.3
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	4.0	1.5	8.3
Servicemembers would report sexual assault to SHARP if it happened to them	Very likely	47.4	39.7	55.1
	Likely	29.4	22.5	36.3
	Unsure	16.8	11.4	23.3
	Unlikely	3.0	0.9	6.9
	Very unlikely	0.2	0.0	1.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	3.3	1.2	7.1

Legend: SHARP = Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

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Table 32: In your experience, how confident are servicemembers in your command of each of the following? (Question 30)

Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
They will be treated with dignity and respect by personnel handling their report of sexual assault	Very confident	72.3	65.6	79.1
	Moderately confident	16.9	11.6	23.2
	Slightly confident	3.5	1.4	7.3
	Not very confident	0.5	0.1	1.7
	Not at all confident	0.1	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.7	3.3	11.9
Reports of sexual assault will be taken seriously by leader(s) in your command	Very confident	72.5	65.7	79.3
	Moderately confident	16.1	10.9	22.5
	Slightly confident	4.3	1.8	8.5
	Not very confident	0.3	0.0	1.3
	Not at all confident	0.2	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.7	3.3	11.8
They will be able to access victim support resources	Very confident	73.9	67.1	80.7
	Moderately confident	15.6	10.4	22.1
	Slightly confident	3.6	1.4	7.4
	Not very confident	0.1	0.0	1.2
	Not at all confident	0.1	0.0	1.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.8	3.3	12.0
They will receive regular updates about the progress of their report	Very confident	64.9	57.5	72.3
	Moderately confident	20.1	14.2	27.1
	Slightly confident	5.8	2.8	10.3
	Not very confident	1.2	0.2	4.0
	Not at all confident	1.1	0.1	4.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.9	3.5	12.2
Their privacy will be protected	Very confident	68.8	61.8	75.8
	Moderately confident	16.0	10.9	22.3
	Slightly confident	6.0	3.0	10.5
	Not very confident	1.3	0.2	4.0
	Not at all confident	1.1	0.1	4.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.7	3.3	12.0

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	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
They will not be treated differently by their supervisor or chain of command for reporting	Very confident	63.5	56.2	70.7
	Moderately confident	18.4	13.0	24.9
	Slightly confident	8.3	4.8	13.3
	Not very confident	2.5	0.8	5.8
	Not at all confident	0.3	0.0	1.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.0	3.6	12.1
They will not be treated differently by other members of their unit for reporting	Very confident	57.1	49.5	64.6
	Moderately confident	19.1	13.6	25.8
	Slightly confident	14.2	9.4	20.4
	Not very confident	2.2	0.9	4.4
	Not at all confident	0.4	0.0	1.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.0	3.6	12.1
They will not be retaliated against for reporting	Very confident	60.3	52.8	67.7
	Moderately confident	20.6	14.8	27.4
	Slightly confident	8.5	5.0	13.5
	Not very confident	1.8	0.6	4.1
	Not at all confident	2.0	0.4	5.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.9	3.5	12.0
Their report will be resolved quickly	Very confident	53.3	45.7	61.0
	Moderately confident	16.2	11.1	22.4
	Slightly confident	14.8	9.7	21.1
	Not very confident	4.5	2.2	8.0
	Not at all confident	3.4	1.3	7.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	7.8	4.1	13.2
Alleged offender(s) will be held accountable	Very confident	51.8	44.1	59.5
	Moderately confident	19.5	13.7	26.3
	Slightly confident	12.6	8.1	18.4
	Not very confident	4.3	2.0	7.9
	Not at all confident	3.1	1.0	7.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	8.8	4.8	14.4

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
Questions Administered and Survey Results**

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
The reporting process overall is effective	Very confident	57.5	49.9	65.0
	Moderately confident	22.3	16.3	29.4
	Slightly confident	9.8	5.8	15.2
	Not very confident	1.5	0.4	4.0
	Not at all confident	2.0	0.5	5.6
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	6.9	3.5	12.0

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
Questions Administered and Survey Results**

Table 33: With regard to addressing sexual assault, how much of a challenge, if at all, are each of the following? (Question 31)
Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Funding for adequate staff for preventing sexual assault	Very challenging	12.9	8.8	18.1
	Moderately challenging	12.2	7.6	18.2
	Slightly challenging	13.9	9.0	20.2
	Not very challenging	10.0	5.9	15.7
	Not at all challenging	20.1	14.1	27.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	30.8	23.5	38.1
Funding for adequate staff for responding to sexual assault	Very challenging	11.2	7.3	16.3
	Moderately challenging	12.0	7.5	17.9
	Slightly challenging	12.1	7.5	18.2
	Not very challenging	11.4	7.0	17.3
	Not at all challenging	21.0	14.9	28.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	32.2	24.8	39.6
Funding for adequate resources for preventing sexual assault	Very challenging	12.1	8.1	17.1
	Moderately challenging	12.4	7.7	18.4
	Slightly challenging	13.0	8.4	19.0
	Not very challenging	12.4	7.7	18.7
	Not at all challenging	20.1	14.1	27.3
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	30.0	22.7	37.3
Funding for adequate resources for responding to sexual assault	Very challenging	9.6	6.2	14.1
	Moderately challenging	10.9	6.6	16.5
	Slightly challenging	16.4	10.9	23.2
	Not very challenging	14.0	9.0	20.3
	Not at all challenging	20.1	14.2	27.2
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	29.1	21.9	36.3
Availability of community resources outside the installation (e.g., crisis centers)	Very challenging	7.1	4.0	11.5
	Moderately challenging	11.6	7.0	17.8
	Slightly challenging	12.9	8.2	19.0
	Not very challenging	18.4	12.7	25.4
	Not at all challenging	28.0	21.0	34.9
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	22.0	15.6	29.4

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
Questions Administered and Survey Results**

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Clear guidance for preventing sexual assault	Very challenging	4.7	2.4	8.2
	Moderately challenging	6.4	3.4	10.7
	Slightly challenging	11.1	6.7	17.0
	Not very challenging	23.4	17.1	30.8
	Not at all challenging	44.6	37.0	52.3
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	9.8	5.4	15.8
Clear guidance for responding to sexual assault	Very challenging	3.6	1.4	7.3
	Moderately challenging	5.7	2.8	10.1
	Slightly challenging	8.7	4.9	13.9
	Not very challenging	21.9	15.8	29.1
	Not at all challenging	50.4	42.7	58.1
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	9.7	5.4	15.8
Continuing education opportunities	Very challenging	8.2	4.6	13.1
	Moderately challenging	10.2	6.1	15.9
	Slightly challenging	15.5	10.3	21.9
	Not very challenging	17.4	11.9	24.1
	Not at all challenging	37.8	30.3	45.3
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	10.9	6.4	17.1
Victim concerns about confidentiality	Very challenging	5.1	2.5	9.2
	Moderately challenging	6.1	3.2	10.5
	Slightly challenging	13.6	8.8	19.8
	Not very challenging	23.6	16.9	30.2
	Not at all challenging	37.9	30.4	45.4
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	13.7	8.6	20.3
Victim concerns about retaliation from their chain of command	Very challenging	4.5	2.2	8.1
	Moderately challenging	5.0	2.4	9.1
	Slightly challenging	14.6	9.6	20.9
	Not very challenging	23.1	16.8	30.4
	Not at all challenging	38.2	30.7	45.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	14.6	9.3	21.3

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
Questions Administered and Survey Results**

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Command support for assisting victims	Very challenging	3.8	1.6	7.5
	Moderately challenging	4.9	2.3	9.0
	Slightly challenging	6.9	3.7	11.7
	Not very challenging	25.2	18.4	32.1
	Not at all challenging	47.2	39.5	54.9
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	12.0	7.2	18.3

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

**Appendix I: SHARP Personnel Survey
Questions Administered and Survey Results**

Table 34: With regard to addressing sexual assault, how much of a challenge, if at all, are each of the following in your command? (Question 32)
Numbers in percentage

	Responses	Estimated percentage	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Local law enforcement investigating a case	Very challenging	6.8	3.8	11.1
	Moderately challenging	7.0	3.8	11.7
	Slightly challenging	12.2	7.6	18.2
	Not very challenging	13.0	8.3	18.9
	Not at all challenging	23.4	17.0	30.7
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	37.7	30.1	45.2
Army Criminal Investigation Command investigating a case	Very challenging	4.4	1.9	8.6
	Moderately challenging	5.7	2.8	10.2
	Slightly challenging	12.3	7.7	18.3
	Not very challenging	14.3	9.4	20.4
	Not at all challenging	30.4	23.4	37.5
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	32.9	25.5	40.3
Obtaining an expedited transfer, if applicable	Very challenging	3.3	1.2	7.2
	Moderately challenging	3.7	1.3	8.1
	Slightly challenging	12.8	7.9	19.3
	Not very challenging	17.0	11.6	23.6
	Not at all challenging	29.9	22.9	36.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	33.4	26.0	40.8
Obtaining a military protective order, if applicable	Very challenging	2.2	0.6	5.6
	Moderately challenging	1.3	0.2	3.9
	Slightly challenging	9.4	5.3	15.2
	Not very challenging	17.7	12.1	24.5
	Not at all challenging	37.6	30.2	45.0
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	31.8	24.5	39.1
Providing special victims' counsel services	Very challenging	3.3	1.2	7.2
	Moderately challenging	3.6	1.4	7.4
	Slightly challenging	9.3	5.3	14.9
	Not very challenging	15.2	10.0	21.7
	Not at all challenging	38.4	30.9	45.8
	No basis to judge/Not applicable	30.2	22.9	37.5

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Appendix II: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of this report were to assess the extent to which the Army has (1) implemented policies and programs to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault; (2) mechanisms in place to oversee the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program and to determine its effectiveness; and (3) identified and addressed barriers to sexual harassment and assault reporting. Our review included active duty Army servicemembers, and related Department of Defense (DOD) and Army policies, procedures, and mechanisms for sexual harassment and assault prevention and response. Our review focused on the Army SHARP program, which is responsible for implementing DOD and Army policy regarding sexual harassment and assault.¹

DOD and the Army define sexual harassment as conduct that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and deliberate or repeated offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature when other conditions are met. Specifically, such behavior constitutes sexual harassment when: (1) submission to such conduct has real or threatened career impacts; (2) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; and (3) the conduct is so severe or pervasive that a reasonable person would perceive, and the victim does perceive, the environment as hostile or offensive.² DOD defines sexual assault as intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault includes a broad category of sexual offenses consisting of the following specific Uniform Code of Military Justice offenses: rape, sexual assault,

¹We did not include incidents of domestic sexual abuse in this review since those incidents are addressed by the Family Advocacy Program. In 2021, we reviewed DOD's efforts to prevent and respond to domestic abuse, among other things. GAO, *Domestic Abuse: Actions Needed to Enhance DOD's Prevention, Response, and Oversight*, [GAO-21-289](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 6, 2021).

²Department of Defense Instruction 1020.03, *Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces* (Feb. 8, 2018) (incorporating change 1, effective Dec. 29, 2020); and Army Regulation 600-20, *Army Command Policy* (July 24, 2020).

aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy (forced oral or anal sex), or attempts to commit these acts.³

Survey of SHARP Personnel

To inform our assessment of the Army's implementation, oversight, and assessment of the SHARP program, we administered and analyzed the results of a web-based survey of current and recent SHARP personnel. Specifically, we surveyed a stratified random sample of current and recent Army SHARP personnel who received initial or renewed certification to hold an Army SHARP position between May 2019 and February 2021. To identify the population of current and recent Army SHARP personnel, we obtained data from DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) on Army personnel who held an active certification through the DOD Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP) in April 2021. All SHARP personnel are required to hold D-SAACP certification, and certifications are valid for 2 years from the certification date. Certifications are updated on a quarterly basis and, according to a DOD official with responsibilities related to the certification program, remain in the database until they expire or are renewed. This data constituted the population frame for our survey, with the in-scope population consisting of individuals with an affiliation status of Active Duty Army or Civilian whose certification was "Approved."

To assess the reliability of the D-SAACP data for this use, we reviewed related DOD documentation, including the methodology for DOD's 2015 QuickCompass of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response-Related Responders: Statistical Methodology Report, which also used D-SAACP data to identify the survey population and select a survey sample.⁴ In addition, we interviewed knowledgeable officials with DOD SAPRO and DOD's Office of People Analytics. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable to use as a population frame for a statistical sample of current and recent Army SHARP personnel who received or renewed certification within the designated timeframe.

³Department of Defense Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program* (Jan. 23, 2012) (incorporating change 5, effective Nov. 10, 2021); and Army Regulation 600-20.

⁴Department of Defense, *2015 QuickCompass of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response-Related Responders: Statistical Methodology Report* (Feb. 2016).

To select our survey sample, we stratified the population by two variables: affiliation status (Army Active Duty/ Civilian) and position (Program Manager (PM), Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), or Victim Advocate (VA)). We designed our survey with the goal of allowing us to make comparisons and statements about each distinct stratum, with a margin of error no larger than plus or minus 7 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence, assuming a 50 percent response rate. This resulted in a final total sample size of 1,198. The stratum population and sample sizes are shown in Table 35.

Table 35: Initial Sample Size Allocation Adjusted for an Assumed Response Rate of 50 Percent

Stratum	Population size	Sample size
Active Duty - Program Managers	4	4
Active Duty - Victim Advocates	5729	380
Active Duty – Sexual Assault Response Coordinators	727	310
Civilian - Program Managers	16	16
Civilian - Victim Advocates	425	270
Civilian – Sexual Assault Response Coordinators	243	218
Total:	7144	1198

Source: GAO Analysis of DOD data. | GAO-22-104673

To design our survey instrument, we reviewed our relevant prior surveys conducted on similar topics as well as DOD surveys. Specifically, we reviewed our survey of Army National Guard and Reserve SHARP Personnel, DOD’s 2015 QuickCompass survey, the fiscal year 2018 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Active Duty Military, and the Defense Organizational Climate Survey.⁵ We adapted questions from these surveys as appropriate, and developed additional questions to address remaining information needs. We conducted pretests of the survey instrument with five SHARP personnel to ensure that the questions were relevant, clearly stated, and easy to understand. Pre-test candidates were selected through coordination with the Army SHARP Program Office from installations not included in our virtual site visits (discussed below), and were selected to represent the range of strata in our sample, as well as both full-time and part-time—or collateral duty—

⁵GAO, *Sexual Assault: Better Resource Management Needed to Improve Prevention and Response in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve*, [GAO-17-217](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2017); Department of Defense, *2015 QuickCompass of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response-Related Responders: Tabulations of Responses* (Mar. 2016); and DOD, *2018 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Active Duty Military: Results and Trends* (May 2019).

SHARP personnel. Informed by pre-test feedback, we made minor revisions to the survey instrument. See appendix I for the full survey instrument and detailed survey results.

We fielded the web survey on July 28, 2021. We conducted telephone follow up with survey non-respondents. We closed the survey on September 15, 2021. Through email bounce back and non-response follow up, we identified 44 individuals in the sample who were either National Guard members or who had since retired from the Army and thus were out of scope. These individuals were removed from the sample in our analysis.

We used logistic regression models on our survey data to look for correlation with the propensity to respond among available administrative variables. We did not find anything and used the standard nonresponse weight adjustment for a stratified random sample. We determined that all responses where at least 80 percent of survey questions had been completed would be considered complete and included in our analysis. The final weighted response rate for the survey was 31 percent.⁶

Because we followed a probability procedure based on random selections, our sample is only one of a large number of samples that we might have drawn. Since each sample could have provided different estimates, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular sample's results as a 95 percent confidence interval (for example, plus or minus 7 percentage points). This is the interval that would contain the actual population value for 95 percent of the samples we could have drawn. Confidence intervals are provided with each sample estimate in the report. All survey results presented in the body of this report are generalizable to the population of Army SHARP personnel, except where otherwise noted.

To analyze comments collected via open-ended survey questions, we identified common topics in the comments and determined categories of interest. We then conducted a two-analyst review of the comments to identify those relevant to the pre-determined categories and coded them as such in a data collection instrument. Specifically, one analyst reviewed and identified comments relevant to the categories of interest, and then another analyst reviewed those determinations and indicated their

⁶The overall unweighted response rate for our survey of current and former SHARP personnel was 41 percent. However, response rate varied across the strata of our survey design, necessitating the use of a weighted survey response rate.

agreement or disagreement. The two analysts then consulted on areas of disagreement to reach consensus. If they were unable to reach consensus, a third analyst reviewed the information and made a final determination.

Methods Used to Assess Army Policies and Programs for Prevention and Response

To assess the extent to which the Army has policies and programs to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault, we assessed Army sexual harassment and assault policy for alignment with related DOD policies. Specifically, one analyst (1) reviewed DOD policies for sexual harassment and assault prevention and response to identify areas of responsibility and requirements for military service policies, and (2) reviewed relevant Army policies to identify the extent to which they aligned with DOD policy. Next, a second analyst reviewed the identified DOD policy sections and aligned Army policy sections to verify the findings, and the two analysts consulted to reach consensus on any differences in findings. We identified Army Regulation 600-20 as the primary relevant Army policy through discussions with Army SHARP officials, and identified other relevant policies through a review of documents referenced in Army Regulation 600-20, and through discussions with SHARP officials.

Further, we interviewed relevant DOD and Army officials at the headquarters level and at a nongeneralizable sample of three Army installations to identify how the Army implements SHARP policies and manages and oversees command SHARP programs. For interviews with installation officials, we selected installations representing a range of small, medium, and large active duty populations. In addition, we selected installations based on sexual harassment and sexual assault risk levels as determined by a 2018 DOD report.⁷ Specifically, we selected installations which were at a high risk of sexual harassment or assault for both men and women, according to DOD's analysis. We further considered the primary missions of units stationed at each installation (such as basic training and ground combat), distance from a major

⁷Department of Defense, *2018 Contextual Risk Factors Associated with Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in Active Duty: Overview Report*.

metropolitan area, and a range of geographic locations within and outside of the continental United States.⁸

In connection with our virtual site visits, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a nongeneralizable sample of 17 brigade and battalion commanders and senior enlisted leaders to gather information about command implementation of the SHARP program. We worked with points of contact at each installation to identify commanders for these interviews based on installation size and the types of units at each installation. We considered this criteria to ensure representation from a variety of units, such as those focused on basic training, leader training, and combat, among others. To analyze the results of these interviews, we identified common themes and developed a data collection instrument. One analyst reviewed the documentation of each interview and recorded information in the data collection instrument. A second analyst then reviewed the interview documentation and verified the information recorded. The two analysts then consulted to reach consensus on any areas of disagreement.

Because we did not select installations or commanders using a statistically representative sampling method, the comments provided during our interviews with installation officials and Army commanders and senior enlisted leaders are nongeneralizable and therefore cannot be projected across the Army or any other installations. While the information obtained was not generalizable, it provided perspectives from installation officials with roles and responsibilities related to implementing the SHARP program and assisting with the response to reported incidents of sexual harassment and assault, as well as related prevention efforts.

We determined that the information and communication components of internal control were relevant to this objective.⁹ Specifically, we identified the underlying principles that management should use quality information—that is current, complete, accurate, accessible, and timely—and internally communicate that information to achieve objectives as relevant to this objective. We assessed the Army’s policies and

⁸We conducted virtual visits to Fort Campbell, KY, Fort Jackson, SC, and US Army Garrison Yongson-Casey, Republic of Korea. Although it met some of our selection criteria, we chose not to include Fort Hood, TX in our virtual visits due to recent and ongoing Army reviews focused on that installation.

⁹GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2014).

procedures for sexual harassment and assault prevention and response and information from our interviews with installation and headquarters-level officials to determine whether the Army met these principles. We also compared information from our analysis of policy, survey results, and interviews to DOD and Army guidance to assess the extent to which the Army's efforts to implement sexual harassment and assault policy are aligned with relevant guidance.¹⁰

Methods Used to Assess Army Mechanisms for Oversight and Determining Effectiveness

To assess the extent to which the Army has mechanisms in place to oversee the SHARP program and determine its effectiveness, as well as identify existing performance measures, we reviewed relevant DOD and Army policies. We also reviewed DOD and Army reports on sexual harassment and assault prevention and response. For example, we reviewed DOD's annual reports on sexual assault in the military, including Army enclosures and appendices identifying and tracking relevant performance measures. We reviewed these reports for fiscal years 2007 through 2020, as well as calendar years 2004 through 2006, to encompass the full period in which DOD has issued its annual reports. In addition, we reviewed a 2020 report commissioned by the Army on command climate and culture at Fort Hood, and a 2021 report on the findings of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, commissioned by DOD.¹¹

We also reviewed Army documentation related to existing oversight and evaluation mechanisms, such as SHARP Staff Assistance Visits and the Army's Organizational Inspection Program. In addition, we reviewed data on reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault provided by the Army annually to the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) and SAPRO for fiscal years 2016 through 2020. We reviewed data for these years to capture recent trends over 5 years, and fiscal year 2020 was the most recent year for which complete data were available at the time of

¹⁰Department of Defense Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Program Procedures* (Mar. 28, 2013) (incorporating change 6, Nov. 10, 2021); DOD Directive 6495.01; DOD Instruction 1020.03; and Army Regulation 600-20.

¹¹Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, *Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee* (Nov. 6, 2020); and Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military* (2021).

our review. To assess the reliability of these data, we reviewed reports of such data submitted by the Army to ODEI and SAPRO, along with relevant documentation, and interviewed knowledgeable Army and DOD officials. We determined that these data were reliable for the purposes of discussing the number of sexual harassment complaints and sexual assault reports recorded by the Army for the fiscal years in question.

In addition, we interviewed relevant DOD and Army officials at the headquarters level and at a nongeneralizable sample of installations. Interviews of installation-level officials included discussions with SHARP personnel and semi-structured interviews with Army commanders and senior enlisted leaders, as discussed above. We also analyzed results from our generalizable survey of current and recent SHARP personnel, also described previously.

We determined that the monitoring, control environment, and information and communication components of internal control were relevant to this objective.¹² Specifically, we identified the underlying principles that management should establish and operate monitoring activities and evaluate results, recruit, develop, and retain competent personnel, and use quality information to achieve objectives as relevant to this objective. We assessed the Army's policies and procedures for oversight and evaluation of the SHARP program and information from our survey and interviews with headquarters and installation officials to determine whether the Army met these principles. We also used information from our interviews with Army officials to identify existing performance measures for the SHARP program. We assessed these performance measures to determine the extent to which they exhibit key attributes of effective performance measures identified by our prior work, such as

¹²[GAO-14-704G](#).

clarity, objectivity, and baseline data.¹³ Specifically, one analyst reviewed the performance measures and related evidence and determined whether they exhibited each of the 10 key attributes of effective performance measures. A second analyst then reviewed the same information and agreed or disagreed with the initial determination. The two analysts then consulted on any areas of disagreement to reach concurrence. We also compared information from our review of policy, Army data, interviews, and survey results to related Army and DOD guidance to assess the extent to which the Army's efforts to oversee and determine the effectiveness of the SHARP program are aligned with current guidance.¹⁴

Methods Used to Assess Identification of Reporting Barriers

To understand the extent to which the Army has identified and addressed barriers to sexual harassment and assault reporting, we reviewed relevant DOD and Army policies and reports, as well as results from DOD's biannual survey of *Workplace and Gender Relations in the Active Duty Military* for fiscal years 2016 and 2018, the most recent years in

¹³Our prior work emphasizes key attributes of performance measures, such as clarity and objectivity. See GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Further Refine Its Tax Filing Season Performance Measures*, [GAO-03-143](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 22, 2002), p. 45, for a description of how we developed the attributes of effective performance goals and measures and *Defense Health Care Reform: Additional Implementation Details Would Increase Transparency of DOD's Plans and Enhance Accountability*, [GAO-14-49](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 6, 2013), p. 17 for a description of why the baseline measure was added as an attribute of effective performance measures. See also *GPRRA Performance Reports*, [GAO/GGD-96-66R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 14, 1996); *Military Personnel: DOD Needs to Establish Performance Measures for the Armed Forces Sports Program*, [GAO-17-542](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jun. 8, 2017); *Sexual Assault: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Prevention Strategy and to Help Ensure It Is Effectively Implemented*, [GAO-16-61](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 4, 2015); *Missile Defense: Opportunity to Refocus on Strengthening Acquisition Management*, [GAO-13-432](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2013); and *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships*, [GAO-11-646SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2011).

¹⁴DOD Instruction 6495.02, vol. 1; DOD Directive 6495.01; Army Regulation 600-20; and Department of Defense, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023: The Department's renewed strategic approach to prevent sexual assault* (April 2019) (hereinafter cited as DOD, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023*).

which the survey was conducted.¹⁵ We also interviewed DOD and Army officials at the headquarters level.

To further identify barriers to sexual harassment and assault reporting, we conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with a nongeneralizable sample of five Army servicemembers who volunteered to speak with us about their experiences with the SHARP program. Specifically, we worked with SHARP personnel and public affairs officials at installations selected for virtual site visits to distribute an announcement inviting interested servicemembers to contact us via email or phone to schedule an interview. To conduct these interviews, we developed a questionnaire, which was reviewed internally by officials with expertise in social science research and mental healthcare or Army personnel matters. These reviews helped ensure that the questions were relevant, sensitive, clearly stated, and easy to understand. We made minor revisions to the questionnaire as needed in response to stakeholder reviews. Interviews were conducted one-on-one with a designated GAO analyst. All analysts who conducted interviews first participated in preparatory sessions with internal experts in social science and mental healthcare. Because interview participants were self-selected, results of these interviews are not generalizable, but they provided useful context and illustrative examples to inform our review.

In addition, we spoke with Army SHARP personnel, Army commanders and senior enlisted leaders, and other Army officials at a nongeneralizable sample of installations and analyzed results from our generalizable survey of current and recent SHARP personnel, as described previously. We compared the information from our analysis of DOD policy, surveys, and interviews to DOD guidance on sexual harassment and assault prevention and response to assess the extent to which the Army's efforts to identify and address reporting barriers are aligned with current guidance.¹⁶

¹⁵DOD, *2018 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Active Duty Military: Results and Trends*; and Department of Defense, *2016 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Military Members: Overview Report* (May 2017).

¹⁶DOD Instruction 6400.09, *DOD Policy on Integrated Primary Prevention of Self-Directed Harm and Prohibited Abuse or Harm* (Sept. 11, 2020); Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Harassment Prevention Strategy for the Armed Forces Fiscal Years 2021-2026* (May 2021); and DOD, *Prevention Plan of Action 2019-2023*.

Table 36 presents the DOD and non-DOD organizations we contacted during our review to address our three objectives.

Table 36: DOD and Non-DOD Organizations Contacted by GAO

Organization	Offices and installations contacted
Department of Defense (DOD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, Virginia • Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Washington, D.C. • Office of People Analytics, Virginia
Department of the Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eighth Army, Republic of Korea • Fort Campbell, Kentucky • Fort Jackson, South Carolina • Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention, Army Resilience Directorate, Virginia • U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan-Casey, Republic of Korea • U.S. Army Installation Management Command, Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas • U.S. Army Pacific Command, Fort Shafter, Hawaii
Nongovernmental organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarksville Area Urban Ministries Safe House, Tennessee • Sexual Trauma Center of the Midlands, South Carolina

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

We conducted this performance audit from January 2021 to May 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix III: GAO Recommendations Related to Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Military

Since January 2008, we have issued 15 reports containing over 100 recommendations and two matters for congressional consideration to improve efforts to combat sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual violence in the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Armed Forces. Specifically, we have made 106 recommendations related to sexual harassment and assault prevention and response to DOD and its components, as well as to the Department of Homeland Security as it relates to the Coast Guard. As of March 2022, these agencies had implemented 42 of those recommendations; we closed 14 due to the inaction of the responsible agencies; and 50 have not yet been implemented. Examples of implemented recommendations include DOD's standardization of the type, amount, and format of the data in the military services' annual sexual assault report submissions and the Commandant of the Coast Guard's issuance of a curriculum for all key program personnel to ensure that they can provide proper advice to Coast Guard personnel.

The 50 recommendations that have not yet been implemented as of March 2022 originate from six related reports on sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual violence in DOD and the Armed Forces. First, in September 2011, we reviewed the extent to which DOD has developed and implemented policies and programs to help prevent and address incidents of sexual harassment involving servicemembers and reported, among other things, that DOD does not have adequate guidance on how incidents of sexual harassment should be handled in environments wherein two or more of the services are operating together.¹

Second, in March 2015, we reviewed DOD's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assaults of male servicemembers and we reported,

¹GAO, *Preventing Sexual Harassment: DOD Needs Greater Leadership Commitment and an Oversight Framework*, [GAO-11-809](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 21, 2011).

among other things, that male servicemembers far underreport their assaults compared to their female counterparts.² Third, in November 2015, we reviewed DOD's efforts to implement prevention-focused activities. We reported that DOD's strategy identified 18 activities, 16 of which remained ongoing; DOD activities may not have been consistent with the department's strategy because these activities had not been communicated or disseminated to the personnel responsible for implementation; and DOD lacked key attributes for effectively measuring program performance, among other things.³

Fourth, in December 2017, we reviewed DOD's efforts to prevent unwanted sexual behaviors and reported, among other things, that DOD had processes for maintaining and reporting consistent data on incidents of unwanted sexual behaviors including sexual assault, but did not have similar processes for maintaining and reporting data on incidents of sexual harassment.⁴ Fifth, in February 2021, we reviewed DOD's prevention of and response to sexual harassment and assault involving DOD federal civilian employees and reported, among other things, that DOD lacks visibility over reported incidents of sexual assault and harassment.⁵ Sixth, in March 2022, we reviewed DOD's implementation of statutory requirements related to sexual assault and harassment in National Defense Authorization Acts from fiscal years 2004 through 2019 and reported, among other things, that some DOD policies did not align with certain statutory requirements.⁶ See table 37 for the 50 recommendations that have not been implemented from these six reports as of March 2022.

²GAO, *Military Personnel: Actions Needed to Address Sexual Assaults of Male Servicemembers*, [GAO-15-284](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 19, 2015).

³GAO, *Sexual Assault: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Prevention Strategy and to Help Ensure It Is Effectively Implemented*, [GAO-16-61](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 4, 2015).

⁴GAO, *Sexual Violence: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Efforts to Address the Continuum of Unwanted Sexual Behaviors*, [GAO-18-33](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 18, 2017).

⁵GAO, *Sexual Harassment and Assault: Guidance Needed to Ensure Consistent Tracking, Response, and Training for DOD Civilians*, [GAO-21-113](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 9, 2021).

⁶GAO, *Sexual Assault: DOD and Coast Guard Should Ensure Laws Are Implemented to Improve Oversight of Key Prevention and Response Efforts*, [GAO-22-103973](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 28, 2022).

**Appendix III: GAO Recommendations Related
to Sexual Harassment and Assault in the
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Table 37: GAO Recommendations Related to Sexual Harassment and Assault Not Implemented as of March 2022

GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
1. GAO-11-809	Department of Defense	To improve leadership's commitment to preventing and responding to incidents of sexual harassment, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to develop a strategy for holding individuals in positions of leadership accountable for promoting, supporting, and enforcing the department's sexual harassment policies and programs. (Priority Recommendation)	Concurred
2. GAO-11-809	Department of Defense	To improve implementation of the department's sexual harassment policies and programs, the Secretary of Defense should direct the service secretaries to verify or track military commanders' compliance with existing requirements that commanders periodically determine their organizational health and functioning effectiveness by periodically assessing their equal opportunity climate through "command climate" assessments.	Concurred
3. GAO-11-809	Department of Defense	To enhance oversight of the department's program to help prevent and to address incidents of sexual harassment involving servicemembers, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to ensure that the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity develops and aggressively implements an oversight framework to help guide the department's efforts. At a minimum, such a framework should contain long-term goals, objectives, and milestones; strategies to accomplish goals; criteria for measuring progress; and results-oriented performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the department's sexual harassment policies and programs. Such a framework should also identify and include a plan for ensuring that adequate resources are available to carry out the office's oversight responsibilities. (Priority Recommendation)	Concurred
4. GAO-15-284	Department of Defense	To improve DOD's ability to prevent sexual assaults of male servicemembers, to increase its responsiveness to male servicemembers who are sexually assaulted, and to help DOD's sexual assault prevention and response program realize the full benefit of the data it collects on sexual assault incidents, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Secretaries of the military services, to develop a plan for data-driven decision making to prioritize program efforts.	Concurred

**Appendix III: GAO Recommendations Related
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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
5. GAO-15-284	Department of Defense	To improve DOD's ability to prevent sexual assaults of male servicemembers, to increase its responsiveness to male servicemembers who are sexually assaulted, and to address challenges faced by male servicemembers as DOD continues to seek to transform its culture to address sexual assault, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Secretaries of the military services, to develop clear goals with associated metrics to drive the changes needed to address sexual assaults of males and articulate these goals, for example in the department's next sexual assault prevention strategy.	Concurred
6. GAO-15-284	Department of Defense	To improve DOD's ability to prevent sexual assaults of male servicemembers, to increase its responsiveness to male servicemembers who are sexually assaulted, and to address challenges faced by male servicemembers as DOD continues to seek to transform its culture to address sexual assault, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Secretaries of the military services, to include information about the sexual victimization of males in communications to servicemembers that are used to raise awareness of sexual assault and the department's efforts to prevent and respond to it.	Concurred
7. GAO-15-284	Department of Defense	To improve DOD's ability to prevent sexual assaults of male servicemembers, to increase its responsiveness to male servicemembers who are sexually assaulted, and to address challenges faced by male servicemembers as DOD continues to seek to transform its culture to address sexual assault, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Secretaries of the military services, to revise sexual assault prevention and response training to more comprehensively and directly address the incidence of male servicemembers being sexually assaulted and how certain behavior and activities--like hazing--can constitute a sexual assault.	Concurred
8. GAO-15-284	Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)	To improve DOD's ability to prevent sexual assaults of male servicemembers, to increase its responsiveness to male servicemembers who are sexually assaulted, and to help ensure that all of DOD's medical and mental health providers are generally aware of any gender-specific needs of sexual assault victims, and that victims are provided the care that most effectively meets those needs, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs should, in collaboration with the services' Surgeons General, develop and issue guidance for the department's medical and mental health providers--and other personnel, as appropriate--based on the results of this evaluation that delineates these gender-specific distinctions and the care regimen that is recommended to most effectively meet those needs.	Concurred

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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
9. GAO-16-61	Department of Defense	To help ensure widespread adoption and implementation of DOD's sexual-assault prevention strategy and to fulfill its role as a framework that can assist leaders and planners in the development of appropriate tasks, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in conjunction with the Secretaries of the military departments, to ensure the military services' Sexual Assault Prevention and Response policies are aligned with the department's prevention strategy.	Concurred
10. GAO-16-61	Department of Defense	To help improve DOD's ability to measure the effectiveness of the department's efforts in preventing sexual assault in the military, the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Secretaries of the military departments, to fully develop the department's performance measures for the prevention of sexual assault so that the measures include all key attributes of successful performance measures.	Concurred
11. GAO-18-33	Department of Defense	The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness should direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness to incorporate in its continuum of harm prevention strategy all the elements that are key for establishing a long-term, results-oriented strategic planning framework. The elements are (1) a mission statement, (2) long-term goals, (3) strategies to achieve goals, (4) external factors that could affect goals, (5) use of metrics to gauge progress, and (6) evaluations of the plan to monitor goals and objectives.	Concurred
12. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, takes steps to assure that as the department finalizes the development of the central repository for Equal Employment Opportunity data, the planned repository includes data for all DOD components and is updated frequently, such as on a quarterly basis.	Concurred
13. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Secretaries of the military departments, issues guidance that clearly defines which civilians under 10 U.S.C. section 1561 are eligible for command investigations of complaints alleging sexual harassment.	Concurred

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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
14. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy, establishes guidance requiring the establishment of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response programs for federal civilian employees of DOD components, including agencies and field activities, where they do not currently exist. For example, DOD may establish or designate a program for use by multiple DOD agencies or require each component to establish its own program based on common department-wide standards.	Concurred
15. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the Secretaries of the military departments, reports to the congressional defense committees on the status of restricted reporting for DOD federal civilian employee victims of sexual assault. This should include, but not be limited to, the history of restricted reporting for DOD federal civilian employees by military department, the anticipated benefits and challenges of extending restricted reporting to DOD federal civilian employees, and requests for congressional actions, if any, that are considered appropriate and necessary to extend restricted reporting to DOD federal civilian employees who are otherwise eligible to file unrestricted reports of sexual assault.	Concurred
16. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy, conducts an analysis to determine the feasibility, benefits, and challenges of expanding eligibility for filing unrestricted reports and providing sexual assault support services to all DOD federal civilian employees within the continental United States and reports to Congress on the findings of this analysis.	Concurred
17. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy, clarifies guidance regarding notification responsibilities of SAPR personnel, if any, when a DOD federal civilian employee who is either not eligible or does not file a restricted or unrestricted report discloses work-related sexual assault.	Concurred

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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
18. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy and the Director of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, issues additional guidance to clearly specify minimum frequency and required content for mandatory sexual harassment training for DOD federal civilian employees in line with leading practices.	Concurred
19. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy and the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, issues guidance for all DOD components to provide training on sexual assault prevention and response to all DOD federal civilian employees and military leaders who supervise federal civilian employees. The guidance should include, but not be limited to, the minimum frequency for such training and required content, in line with leading practices identified by subject-matter experts, such as those identified by GAO or those currently required in Sexual Assault Prevention and Response training for servicemembers, appropriately adapted for the civilian workforce.	Concurred
20. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy and the Director of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, incorporates clearly detailed DOD-wide sexual harassment prevention efforts specific to DOD federal civilian employees in existing or additional strategic guidance.	Concurred
21. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy and the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, incorporates clearly detailed DOD-wide sexual assault prevention efforts specific to DOD federal civilian employees in existing or additional strategic guidance.	Concurred
22. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, expands guidance that specifies and defines uniform data elements that all DOD components should use when collecting and reporting on allegations of harassment made by DOD federal civilian employees outside of the Equal Employment Opportunity process, such as information about the parties involved, the type of harassment, and actions taken to respond to the allegation.	Concurred

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23.	GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
23.	GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, clarifies guidance regarding the requirement for the Secretaries of the military departments to maintain data on informal complaints of harassment, including the definition of an informal complaint for tracking purposes; how such data should be maintained, including by a headquarters-level organization; and which informal complaints should be reported to the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on an annual basis.	Concurred
24.	GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy and the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, issues guidance for the military departments to comprehensively track information about reported work-related sexual assaults involving DOD federal civilian employee victims in the continental United States, regardless of eligibility for DOD-provided sexual assault support services, including the status and affiliation of the victim and alleged offender and actions taken by DOD in response, such as any referrals or support services provided.	Concurred
25.	GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy and the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, issues guidance that requires all DOD components, including agencies and field activities, to track reported work-related sexual assaults involving their federal civilian employees as victims or alleged offenders, including the specific data elements to be collected, such as status and affiliation of the victim and alleged offender and actions taken by DOD in response, and common definitions for those data elements.	Concurred
26.	GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, take steps to provide DOD-credentialed Sexual Assault Response Coordinators across the department, including coordinators assigned to an agency or field activity, access to record and review their components' reported work-related sexual assaults in the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database.	Concurred

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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
27. GAO-21-113	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, clarifies guidance specifying how DOD components' anti-harassment programs should be separated from the formal EEO process when the EEO office oversees the anti-harassment program.	Concurred
28. GAO-22-103973	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the Secretaries of the military departments, include all required information in DOD annual reports, and if any required information is not included, explain why, and whether there is a plan to include it in future annual reports.	Concurred
29. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Army	The Secretary of the Army should ensure all required information is included in the annual reports.	Concurred
30. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Navy	The Secretary of the Navy should ensure that the Navy and the Marine Corps include all required information in the annual reports.	Concurred
31. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Air Force	The Secretary of the Air Force should ensure all required information is included in the annual reports.	Concurred
32. GAO-22-103973	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness—in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the Secretaries of the military departments—sets a timeframe to establish, and establishes, an evaluation plan and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the SAPR program and related activities—such as policies and training—in achieving its intended outcomes, as required by section 1602(c) and 1612(a) and (b) of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2011 and section 545(a) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017.	Concurred
33. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Army	The Secretary of the Army should review and update guidance, and set a timeframe for completion, to ensure compliance with statutory requirements related to the consistent tracking of command climate assessments in the applicable database, as required by section 1721 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014 and Army guidance.	Concurred
34. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Navy	The Secretary of the Navy should ensure that the Commandant of the Marine Corps reviews and updates Marine Corps guidance, and sets a timeframe for completion, to ensure compliance with statutory requirements related to including command climate information in commanders' performance evaluations and assessments, as required by section 508 of the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon NDAA for Fiscal Year 2015.	Concurred

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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
35. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Air Force	The Secretary of the Air Force should review and update guidance, and set a timeframe for completion, to ensure compliance with statutory requirements related to including command climate information in commanders' performance evaluations and assessments, as required by section 508 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2015.	Concurred
36. GAO-22-103973	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should review and update policy or establish policy, and set a timeframe for completion, to ensure alignment with sexual assault prevention and response statutory requirements, specifically section 1741(a)-(c) and (f) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014, in coordination with Secretary of the Army as the DOD Executive Agent of the United States Military Entrance Processing Command.	Concurred
37. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Army	The Secretary of the Army should review and update policy or establish policy, and set a timeframe for completion, to ensure alignment with sexual assault prevention and response statutory requirements, specifically section 582(a) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, and section 520(a) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2018.	Concurred
38. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Navy	The Secretary of the Navy should review and update policy or establish policy, and set a timeframe for completion, to ensure alignment with sexual assault prevention and response statutory requirements, specifically section 1741(a)-(c) and (f) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014.	Concurred
39. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Navy	The Secretary of the Navy should ensure that the Commandant of the Marine Corps reviews and updates policy or establishes policy, and sets a timeframe for completion, to ensure alignment with sexual assault prevention and response statutory requirements, specifically, section 1745(a)-(c) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014 and updates such policies for compliance with the statute.	Concurred
40. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Army	The Secretary of the Army should take steps to ensure compliance with section 535(a)-(b) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2018 by—for example— documenting relevant actions in policy or other relevant guidance.	Concurred
41. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Navy	The Secretary of the Navy should take steps to ensure compliance with section 535(a)-(b) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2018 by—for example— documenting relevant actions in policy or other relevant guidance.	Concurred
42. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Air Force	The Secretary of the Air Force should take steps to ensure compliance with section 535(a)-(b) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2018 by—for example—documenting relevant actions in policy or other relevant guidance.	Concurred

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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
43. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Army	The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Superintendent of the United States Military Academy West Point takes steps to document actions, including the dissemination of the resource guide, taken in accordance with section 545(a)-(c) of the John S. McCain NDAA for Fiscal Year 2019.	Concurred
44. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Navy	The Secretary of the Navy should ensure that the Superintendent of the United States Naval Academy takes steps to document actions taken in accordance with section 545(a)-(c) of the John S. McCain NDAA for Fiscal Year 2019.	Concurred
45. GAO-22-103973	Department of the Air Force	The Secretary of the Air Force should ensure that the Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy takes steps to document actions, including the dissemination of the resource guide, taken in accordance with section 545(a)-(c) of the John S. McCain NDAA for Fiscal Year 2019.	Concurred
46. GAO-22-103973	Department of Defense	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the Secretaries of the military departments, establishes an oversight structure that includes mechanisms to consistently track and document implementation of ongoing and future NDAA statutory requirements related to sexual assault prevention and response to ensure compliance with applicable laws and improve oversight of its SAPR program.	Concurred
47. GAO-22-103973	Department of Homeland Security	The Secretary of Homeland Security should ensure that the Commandant of the Coast Guard, in collaboration with the Director of Health, Safety & Work Life Directorate, reviews and updates policy or establishes policy, and sets a timeframe for completion, to ensure alignment with sexual assault prevention and response statutory requirements, specifically, sections 1712 and 1745(a)-(c) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014.	Concurred
48. GAO-22-103973	Department of Homeland Security	The Secretary of Homeland Security should ensure that the Commandant of the Coast Guard, in collaboration with the Director of Health, Safety & Work Life Directorate, implements the education and training on sexual assault prevention and response for individuals enlisted under a delayed entry program by—for example—documenting such training in policy or other relevant guidance to ensure compliance with section 535(a)-(b) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2018.	Concurred

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GAO report number	Responsible agency	Recommendation	Agency's response
49. GAO-22-103973	Department of Homeland Security	The Secretary of Homeland Security should ensure that the Commandant of the Coast Guard publishes quarterly reports related to the processing and outcomes of claims reviewed by the Discharge Review Boards to ensure compliance with section 521(b) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2018.	Concurred
50. GAO-22-103973	Department of Homeland Security	The Secretary of Homeland Security should ensure that the Commandant of the Coast Guard, in collaboration with the Director of Health, Safety & Work Life Directorate, establishes an oversight structure that includes mechanisms to consistently track and document implementation of ongoing and future NDAA statutory requirements related to sexual assault prevention and response to ensure compliance with applicable laws and improve oversight of its SAPR program.	Concurred

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104673

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Defense



UNDER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

MAY 16 2022

Ms. Brenda Farrell
Director, Defense Capabilities Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington DC 20548

Dear Ms. Farrell,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report GAO-22-104673, "SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT: The Army Should Take Steps to Enhance Program Oversight, Evaluate Effectiveness, and Identify Reporting Barriers," dated April 11, 2022 (GAO Code 104673).

Attached is DoD's response to the subject report. My point of contact is Ms. Tammy D. Coon who can be reached at 703-571-7267 or via email at tammy.d.coon.civ@army.mil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gabe Camarillo".

Gabe Camarillo



UNDER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

16 MAY 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR U.S. Army Audit Agency, Office of the Deputy Auditor General,
ATTN: SAAG-FIZ, 6000 5th Street, Building 1464, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5609

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Intent to GAO Draft Report: Sexual Harassment and
Assault: The Army Should Take Steps to Enhance Program Oversight, Evaluate
Effectiveness, and Identify Reporting Barriers (GAO-22-104673)

1. This memorandum is a response to GAO Draft Report GAO-22-103973 Sexual
Harassment and Assault: The Army Should Take Steps to Enhance Program Oversight,
Evaluate Effectiveness, and Identify Reporting Barriers to provide an Official Army
position from the Under Secretary of the Army on recommendations 1-9.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of
the Army SHARP Program expedites and establishes a timeline for the issuance of a
SHARP regulation that consolidates the various policies, to include clarified procedures
for managing sexual harassment complaints.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. The Army will publish a consolidated SHARP regulation
that combines the various policies, to include clarified procedures for managing sexual
harassment complaints no later than 1 November 2022.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of
the Army SHARP Program conducts a review of the consolidated SHARP regulation
prior to issuance to ensure that it aligns with DoD policy for sexual harassment and
assault prevention response.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. Prior to publishing a new consolidated SHARP
Regulation, the Director of the SHARP Program will thoroughly review all statutory and
regulatory changes, including federal laws and DoD policies on sexual harassment and
assault prevention and response to ensure the new regulation aligns with current
statutory authorities and DoD policy.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Secretary of the Army should establish a mechanism to
ensure that Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) have direct and
unimpeded access to the installation commander, as well as the immediate commander
of both the service member victim and alleged service member offender, without going
through layers in the chain of command. This could be accomplished by, for example,

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Intent to GAO Draft Report: Sexual Harassment and Assault: The Army Should Take Steps to Enhance Program Oversight, Evaluate Effectiveness, and Identify Reporting Barriers (GAO-22-104673)

providing SARCs with the requisite designation or categorization needed to facilitate direct communication with their commander.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. The Department of the Army recently published EXORD 126-22 (*Identification of Lead Sexual Assault Response Coordinators aligned to Senior Commanders*). Provisions of this EXORD reiterated guidance within DoDI 6495.02 that directs commanders to provide immediate and unimpeded access to all Sexual Assault Response Coordinators. The HQDA SHARP Program Organizational Inspection Program has added this item to its checklist to oversee compliance on this issue. Non-compliance from commanders, as identified by HQDA SHARP Program Office, will be reported through the Senior Commander to Secretary of the Army. Furthermore, within EXORD 126-22, the Army directed that installation Lead SARCs will report directly to, and be operational supervised by, the Senior Commander and be designated as special staff to facilitate the identification of and responses to any programmatic issues, to include lack of direct access to commanders by SARCs or other professionals that provide support to victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program publishes or directly links all relevant resources to assist commanders in implementing their SHARP programs in a single, easily accessible location, such as the SHARP learning portal, and comprehensively publicizes the list to commanders so that existing resources are readily available and easily accessible when needed.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. The Army has a dedicated website for SHARP resources used throughout our enterprise found at www.ArmyResilience.army.mil/sharp. In July 2021, we launched new awareness materials containing the latest SHARP messaging. During this same time, the Army began publishing monthly Senior Leader Executive Summaries (EXSUM), which contain the latest information regarding news, policies, resources, and talking points regarding the SHARP Program. In March 2022, the Army developed Fact Sheets about DoD policy changes to include information about the SHARP website that was distributed to Command Teams and SHARP Program Managers as part of the SECARMY-directed SHARP Leader Training. Most recently, the Army added a specific "Commanders Resources" section for SHARP and ensured it contains direct links to all DoD SAPRO, ODE&I, and other relevant material for command teams. The Army will continue to utilize communication plans to ensure command teams are aware of these resources, as well as highlight the same at all pre-command courses.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Secretary of the Army should design an oversight structure in accordance with existing DoD guidance for implementation of recommendations stemming from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military. The oversight structure should also: (1) Include a mechanism for

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comprehensive oversight of SHARP programs at the installation and command level, to include visibility into all areas of program implementation, such as inspection results, funding, and staffing; (2) direct that the SHARP Program Office is structured so as to enforce commander accountability for program implementation; and (3) ensure that the SHARP Program Office has adequate personnel resources to carry out its oversight responsibilities.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. As a part of OSD's Implementation Plan for the Independent Review Commission Recommendations, the entire SHARP program is being restructured. This restructuring will include a new Army Senior Leader governance framework to enforce commander accountability for program implementation and inspection result findings. The Army is also building new resource management tools and processes for the SHARP Program to gain visibility of commander's execution of SHARP Program funding and the funding associated with the implementation of the Independent Review Commission recommendations to ensure that funds are correctly programmed and executed.

Starting in 3Q/FY22, the Army is adding ten new positions to the HQDA SHARP Program to build adequate personnel resources to carry out program oversight responsibilities as part of the program restructure. The Army will begin hiring into these positions no later than 4Q/FY22. The Army is also undergoing a manning analysis, as directed by OSD, to be completed no later than 30 September 2022. This will further inform the requirement of additional positions for not only the HQDA SHARP Program Office, but Major Commands to have an appropriate staffing level to carry out their oversight obligations across the enterprise.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program issues guidance to ensure that incidents of sexual assault that are not officially reported but are disclosed to SHARP personnel and medical providers without access to the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID) are shared with a brigade-level SARC and documented in the SAPR Relation Inquiry module in DSAID.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. Although not directed as a requirement in DoDI 6495.02, the Army agrees there is a benefit and utility in documenting sexual assault victim information wherein the victim makes a complaint for the purposes of receiving support services to someone without DSAID access and therefore the complaint is not officially documented. This will also support the Army's ability to further understand prevalence within our population.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Secretary of the Army should develop a suite of performance measures that measure the desired outcomes for the SHARP program

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and, at a minimum, are clearly defined, objective, balanced, and enable consistent tracking of program performance over time.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. As cited in the GAO Report: *DoD and Coast Guard Should Ensure Laws Are Implemented to Improve Oversight of Key Prevention and Response Efforts* (103973) and this report, the DoD has not developed program performance measures for sexual assault prevention and response program, which further impacts the Army's ability to do so in a standardized approach across the Services. Since the Army's sexual assault and harassment programs are combined, it must be noted that the DoD's sexual harassment program (overseen by a different agency than sexual assault) has not developed program performance measures for the Services to implement, as well. The Army will continue to work with DoD SAPRO and ODE&I to develop standardized performance measures, so that the Services can execute. As a part of our previous work on the DoD's Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA), the Army was in the process of developing programmatic metrics, but this work has been put on hold by DoD, until updated PPoA guidance, to include the addition of the IRC recommendations, is complete. DoD expects the new PPoA guidance to be published May 2022.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Secretary of the Army should develop and implement a continuous evaluation plan that employs a suite of fully-developed performance measures to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program. The plan should include ensuring that there are sufficient personnel with the relevant competencies, skills, and knowledge needed to implement the plan.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. Once DoD provides standardized performance measures for the Services to utilize, the Army will ensure the HQDA SHARP Program Office is sufficiently staffed with personnel with the relevant competencies, skills, and knowledge needed to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the SHARP program, in both its prevention and response capabilities across both sexual harassment and sexual assault.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The Secretary of the Army should ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP Program conducts a systematic assessment to identify barriers to sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting and develops a plan to mitigate identified barriers and encourage reporting. Such barriers may include concerns related to the staffing structure of the SHARP program and perceptions about the prevalence of false reporting.

ARMY RESPONSE: Concur. The Army has a number of different research projects underway focused on identification of barriers to sexual assault and sexual harassment reporting, which will inform evidence-based development of plans to mitigate identified barriers. Current research projects include a RAND Arroyo Center assessment of how

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climate predicts sexual assault and sexual harassment risk. This study will also identify the features of unit and supervisor climate that serve as the most appropriate prevention targets, specifically including barriers to sexual assault and sexual harassment reporting. Another qualitative study is with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) that analyzes how Soldiers' sexual harassment reporting experiences vary depending upon numerous factors (e.g., demographics, the nature of the incident). An additional planned (near-term) research project with RAND Arroyo Center will use focus groups to describe Soldiers' experiences with sexual harassment and gender discrimination, including analysis of barriers to existing prevention services and sexual harassment reporting.

2. I concur with all target actions and completion dates provided for recommendations 1-9 within this memorandum.

3. The point of contact is Ms. Jill Londagin, jill.m.londagin.civ@army.mil, or 703-571-7224.



Gabe Camarillo

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Kimberly Mayo (Assistant Director), Angela Kaylor (Analyst in Charge), Jonathan Adams, Carl Barden, Tracy Barnes, Molly Callaghan, Peter Casey, Ronald La Due Lake, Jill Lacey, Amie Lesser, Molly Miller, and Lillian Moyano Yob made significant contributions to this report.

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