

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
DACOWITS' SEPTEMBER 2019 RFI 7
DOMESTICE ABUSE/VIOLENCE PROGRAM

PURPOSE: The purpose of this paper is to provide written response to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) requests for information (RFI) 7, regarding Domestic Abuse/Violence affecting Servicewomen. This paper is being provided on behalf of the Air Force Family Advocacy Program (FAP), the Air Force Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for the Prevention and Intervention of Domestic Abuse/Violence, Child Abuse/Neglect, and Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Youth. This information is provided in support of the DACOWITS' projected September 2019 meeting.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

RFI 7:

- Information regarding safe housing for servicewomen who are victims of domestic violence (DV): Policies and procedures that ensure safety of DV victims once an incident occurs, to include data on where Servicemembers are housed in such cases (to include whether on- or off-base).

- "Safety planning" is a phrase common throughout Defense of Defense (DoD) and Air Force guidance on response to domestic abuse and child maltreatment, and it is a primary component of any response to a victim/family.
- During assessment, FAP providers must consider whether partners should be separated to reduce risk (though a couple may have already been separated by law enforcement and/or the chain of command). As part of the safety planning process, a safe location for the victim is absolutely part of the discussion.
- Where to seek an alternate location, shelter, or housing is deferred to the discretion of the victim to as great an extent as possible. While FAP providers or Victim Advocates will help the victim consider available options, the victim still has the primary say in the matter.
- Not all situations where a separation is recommended are equal.
 - In more common situations where the risk is low to moderate, choosing temporary housing plans that simply allow for a "cooling off" period would be the norm.
 - In these cases, attempts are generally made to allow the victim to remain in the home, with the alleged offender being the one to leave (or be removed) to another location. This is simplest when the alleged offender is the uniformed member. Local command

structure will typically be able to accommodate the alleged offender in a dormitory or temporary lodging facility for short timeframes.

- Some victims will opt for informal options, such as choosing to stay with a trusted friend.
- When these cases become longer-term scenarios, a multitude of options come into play. Again, these are often driven by victim choice. For example, a victim might choose to return to his/her family of origin's home, or the victim might choose to secure his/her own housing.
- When the risk level is high and/or acute, the need for rapid access to housing is correspondingly high/acute.
 - As with lower risk scenarios, attempts are often made to allow the victim to remain in the home. This of course assumes the military is in a position to be able to dictate who stays and who leaves (i.e., the alleged offender is the service member and can therefore be ordered into temporary quarters).
 - If the victim happens to be the service member, the situation becomes somewhat more complicated. Installations are unlikely to have their own shelter facility. Air Force guidance offers a template for installations to use to establish Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with local shelters where available. However, overseas locations do not typically have such community-based options. In these cases, local installation leaders and helping agencies get creative in finding alternatives for the safety of victim/family (e.g., access to a vacant unit within the temporary lodging facilities or to a house in the installation's on-base housing community). This is an acknowledged challenge at these locations.
 - Children and pets can dramatically complicate the situation. Some locations will absolutely not accept one or both.
- The Air Force does not track data on specifically where a victim is housed/sheltered in the event that a separation from the alleged offender is required.
 - This information may be documented on formal safety plans developed by the victim with a FAP provider or Victim Advocate, or specified in a FAP provider's clinical documentation.
 - As alluded to above, the options for safe housing following an incident can vary based on the circumstances of the incident, the risk level involved, the desires of the victim, and the availability of a location that meets the needs of the victim/family.

- *Explain interpretation of “suitable, safe, and alternate housing” for victims per DoDI 6400.06.*
 - The location must allow for true separation of the victim from an alleged offender. This means the actual physical removal of at least one party from the home. Depending on the risk level assessed, there may be need for not just separation, but also a secured, undisclosed location to maintain safety.
 - The “suitable” idea is the more difficult piece to interpret. This can be situation-dependent and takes into account the perspectives of the victim, installation leaders, and helping agencies. For example, the suitability of a location for an active duty female victim with no children must be viewed somewhat differently from an active duty female victim with two young children.
 - This is not intended to be the family’s long-term solution. Alternate housing for victims is sought for a period of time sufficient to meet a certain objective (e.g., to allow for a 72-hour “cooling off” period, to allow additional time for further risk assessments, or to allow time for the long-term plan to be finalized).