

FINAL – INFORMATION PAPER

September 2024

**PURPOSE:** To provide a response to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) September 2024 request for information.

**THRU:** Office of Force Resiliency, Military Community Advocacy (MCA)

**Background:** In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&T) Subcommittee will assess updates to the DoD Instruction 6400.06, “DoD Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse Involving DoD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel,” incorporating Change 3 dated July 11, 2024, and determine whether the DACOWITS’ 2019 recommendations related to domestic abuse were implemented. In addition, the WB&T Subcommittee will examine the status, increase, or decrease in domestic abuse incidents; the effectiveness of current DoD and Military Services’ policies; and evaluate whether there are additional policy inconsistencies that need to be remedied (e.g., definition of intimate partner).

DACOWITS requests a written response to following questions:

**A. In FY21-22, how many of the offenders who committed domestic-violence associated suicides/homicides and how many of the IPV homicide victims were known to FAP prior to the fatal incidents? Provide the numbers by FY and by offender/victim/Service status.**

**Responses were provided to the Committee from the Services.**

**B. How many of IPV offenders or victims were known to possess firearms before the fatality incident?**

**RESPONSE:**

- FAP does not track this information as the Department is prohibited from collecting data on privately owned firearms.
- As part of a clinical risk assessment, FAP Clinical Providers may inquire about the presence of firearms in the home, as reported by the victim or alleged abuser if the FAP clinical provider has reasonable grounds to believe the service member is at risk for suicide or causing harm to others.
- Service members residing on installations may be required to register their personal firearms on the installation. Post commanders have the authority to establish regulations governing mandatory weapon registration for all residents residing on a military installation.

**C. If known, in how many instances of IPV fatality incidents had firearms been removed from an offender's home, had the offender voluntarily turned them in for storage outside the home, or had removal attempts been made prior to the fatality incident?**

**RESPONSE:** FAP does not track this information.

**D. What are the strategies/procedures used to determine whether an alleged offender owns or possesses a firearm (personally owned or military-issued)?**

**RESPONSE:**

- As part of risk and lethality assessment with a victim who is willing to answer self-report questions, victims are asked about their knowledge of an alleged abuser's access to weapons. In situations where Family Advocacy is able to meet with an alleged abuser, a FAP clinical provider may inquire about ownership of or access to firearms if reasonable grounds exist to believe the member is a risk for suicide or causing harm to others in accordance with DoDI 6400.06.
- Depending on the severity and risk level of an incident, commanders, as part of the CCR, are also responsible for determining whether an alleged abuser has access to government issued weapons and restricting their access to government-issued firearms. Additionally, a commander may inquire about privately owned firearms if the commander has reasonable grounds to believe the person is at risk for suicide or causing harm to others. Commanders do not have the authority to remove an alleged abuser's personally owned firearms.
- If an individual has a qualifying conviction for domestic violence, the appropriate authority will immediately retrieve all the individual's U.S. Government-issued firearms and ammunition; suspect their authority to have a U.S. Government-issued firearms or ammunition; and advise them to appropriately surrender, transfer, or dispose of their POV firearms and ammunitions, IAW applicable laws and regulations. See DoDI 6400.06.

**E. Are known offenders required or encouraged to store firearms outside the home? Provide information about the policies/procedures/protocols relevant to removing firearms from residences of those known to the installation FAP.**

**RESPONSE:**

- During the FAP process, victims, alleged abusers, and commanders are informed of the risks associated with firearms in the home during incidents of violence. Identifying and communicating these risk and protective factors to clients and commanders enables informed decision-making regarding safety and risk management.
- FAP may recommend to the alleged abuser measures such as the temporary removal of firearms from the home to enhance safety.

**F. How often is an offender removed from his/her home environment in IPV/DA situations? In addition, what are the criteria, circumstances, and relevant regulatory/policy provisions which are used to make such a decision? Identify the procedural differences for on- and off-base housing.**

**RESPONSE:**

- FAP does not collect data on the frequency with which an alleged abuser is removed from the home environment due to IPV/DA incidents. FAP's primary role at the installation is supportive clinical counseling, assessment, and treatment.
- In the FAP process, initial and follow-up risk assessments are conducted following every allegation of restricted or unrestricted report of abuse. Risk assessments are one resource that guides recommendations to commanders.
- Recommendations may include consideration to remove an active-duty alleged abuser from the home based on risk assessment.
- These types of recommendations are made by FAP in circumstances of high-risk indicators in situations where there is significant concern for the safety of a victim, such as:
  - Threats of lethal violence when the active-duty service member has made credible threats to use lethal violence against the victim or others in the household.
  - Where there is a pattern of escalation of violence in the severity or frequency of violence.
  - Use of weapons in an incident of violence.
  - Patterns of controlling behavior (stalking) by the alleged abuser.
  - Psychological state of the alleged abuser, such as exhibiting signs of suicidal or homicidal ideation.

**G. Does MCA work with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, and if so, what collaborations have resulted in new programs/policies? Are there any upcoming collaborative efforts underway?**

**RESPONSE:**

- **Transition of Military Community Advocacy (MCA) From Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) to the Office of Force Resiliency (OFR)**  
Effective August 11, 2024, Military Community Advocacy (MCA) transitioned from Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) to align functionally and operationally under the Office of Force Resiliency (OFR), which is the same policy office that maintains oversight over the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO).

This transition, which aligns with the Secretary approved recommendations of the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee, will help to:

- Improve efficiency, communication, and to strengthen the coordinated community response across all prevention programs.
- Ensure that all programs covering harmful behaviors will fall under one umbrella.

- Integrate the programs at the Department level to impact all three levels of prevention, develop integrated prevention models and combine efforts at all echelons to maximize the impact of the workforce.
- **Membership in Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) Forums**

The MCA is a representative member in multiple forums related to the DSPO. Collaborative relationships have been reinforced via multiple opportunities such as the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee (SPARRC) and the Suicide Prevention General Officer Steering Committee (SPGOSC). The DSPO also serves as a member of the annual DoD Fatality Review Summit.

MCA continues to collaborate with the DSPO to broadly understand and identify relationship-conflict based suicide risk. Of note, the risks associated with both suicide and homicide in cases of domestic violence are complex and varied, necessitating an agile approach to assessment and mitigation strategies.
- **VA/DoD Suicide Prevention Conference**

On July 19, 2024, Military Community Advocacy facilitated a training session on “Exploring the Intersection of Domestic Violence and Suicide: Implications for Prevention and Intervention” at the 2024 VA/DOD Suicide Prevention Conference in Portland, Oregon. The presentation highlighted the critical role of prevention, clinical intervention strategies and a coordinated community response in mitigating the risk of suicide among individuals with a history of domestic violence.