



CUYAMACA
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CUYAMACA VETERANS CENTER PRESENTS

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

APRIL 2021



**WE STAND
WITH SURVIVORS**

**WE BELIEVE
SURVIVORS**

Every 73 seconds someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. Every 30 minutes, that someone is a service member. In this newsletter we will talk about what Military Sexual Trauma is, provide statistics on the occurrence of sexual assault in the U.S. military, and resources that can help survivors and their loved ones.

Because of its prevalence, chances are that you know someone who has been sexually assaulted. So please read through this newsletter, hold on to it, share it, and contact us if you have any questions or need assistance. All personal matters discussed in the Cuyamaca Veterans Center are confidential. We are a space for brave people, and we are here to help.



What is Military Sexual Trauma?

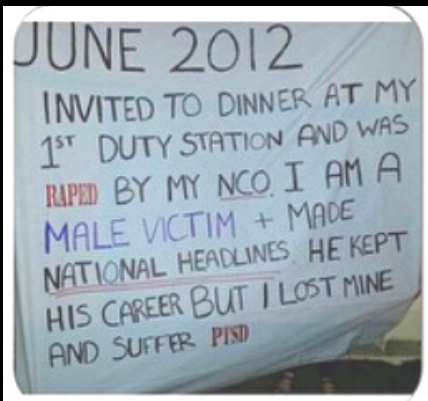
Military sexual trauma, or MST, refers to a **service member's** experience with sexual assault or sexual harassment occurring at any point during their military service. How is MST different than sexual assault occurring with a civilian? Here are just a few reasons:

- The military, in every branch, has their own "justice department" with separate reporting protocols and a separate court system.
- "Consequences" for attackers in the military may be a military prison sentence, but it also may be a transfer of duty station, with a possibility of a **promotion** to justify the transfer, causing further traumatization to the survivor.
- Support systems for survivors in the military can look like a response team, mental health services, and advocates. But those systems can also uphold rape culture when there is a false diagnosis of a pre-existing mental condition, military discharge of "other than honorable" or lower with **no eligibility** for access to VA healthcare, mental health service, or disability.



The outcomes of MST may look different than the outcomes for a civilian survivor, but it is important to **not compare trauma**. The Veterans Center does not condone any invalidation of the trauma of any survivor.

How common is it?



In 2018, 20,500 service members were sexually assaulted or raped. This includes 13,000 women and 7,500 men. The rate of sexual assault and rape jumped by almost 40% from 2016 to 2018, and for women the rate increased by over 50% to the highest level since 2006. Of women who reported penetrative sexual assault, 59% were assaulted by someone with a higher rank than them, and 24% were assaulted by someone in their chain of command.

- 1 in 4 female veterans in the VA healthcare system report experiencing MST.
- 1 in 100 male veterans in the VA healthcare system report experiencing MST.
- Women are at an increased risk for experiencing MST, but 40% of all veterans who disclose MST to VA are men. It is important to acknowledge the stigma of rape, and thus understand that there are many more undisclosed cases.
- In 2018, 76% of MST survivors did not report the attack.

Help is out there

Help for survivors

- DoD [Safe Helpline](#) provides live, confidential, anonymous, secure, and available worldwide, 24/7— providing survivors with the help they need anytime, anywhere.
- VA provides Veterans with free treatment for any physical or mental health conditions related to MST. No documentation of the MST experience or VA disability compensation rating is required. Please view more information about VA's MST-related [treatment](#) and [resources](#) to learn more.
- RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE, [online.rainn.org](#) y [rainn.org/es](#)) and also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.
- The [Veterans Crisis Line](#) is for any veteran in crisis or anyone concerned about a veteran. Simply call 1-800-273-8255 or text anything to 838255. Literally text anything and a real person will answer.

Help for supporters of survivors

- Sometimes, survivors are hesitant to share their experiences because they are not sure how others will react. It's not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you they've been sexually assaulted, but an empathetic reaction can make all the difference. Here are some helpful [resources](#) to better support the survivor in your life.

Help for Cuyamaca College students

- For help overturning a discharge designation, filing a disability claim, finding community resources, connecting with a victims advocate, or you just want to talk, please email allan.estrada@gcccd.edu or make a virtual appointment [here](#). Click on the Veterans Center logo below for more resources and support.
- To speak to a personal counselor, please make a virtual counseling appointment [here](#). Please note that if you are interested in seeing a veteran personal counselor, Jason Astorga is a U.S. Navy veteran; however, you are not required to speak to a veteran.

