

Sept. 30, 2021, 6:17 p.m. | 6 minute read | 56 views

## Lead the Way to End Abuse

Domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect are incompatible with military values and reduce mission readiness. It is the duty of every leader to recognize the signs of an abusive relationship, take seriously any reports of abuse and immediately report and respond to the abuse.

The Family Advocacy Program is congressionally mandated and a key element of the Department of Defense's coordinated community response for preventing and responding to reports of child abuse and neglect and domestic abuse in military families.

Your installation's FAP staff members are your partners in the effort to end domestic abuse. Leaders should work with FAP to promote a culture of support for victims, and work with service members and their families to promote the rehabilitation of individuals who use violence in their relationships by teaching them healthy behaviors. Victim safety is always the top priority.

### Duty — report and respond

Your role is to report and respond to allegations of domestic abuse as well as child abuse and neglect. [Educate yourself on domestic abuse](#) and the [resources available to you and to victims](#). This will make your job easier when you receive a report and need to respond.

Your duty to report and respond begins when:

- Anyone reports abuse to you
- A victim chooses to make an [unrestricted report](#)
- You suspect, learn about or witness abuse
- You are in a leadership role — it is your constant duty to promote safety and create an atmosphere in the workplace in which victims know they will be believed and can get the help they need

The following resources may help you with your responsibilities:

- Article — [Domestic Abuse: Military Reporting Options](#)
- Flyer — [5 Ways Command Leaders Can Help End Domestic Abuse](#)
- Webpage — [2021 Domestic Violence Awareness Month Toolkit](#)

It's important for you to [understand what FAP offers to victims](#) and what happens when they make an unrestricted report of abuse. You will need to be able to inform victims that the role of a FAP domestic abuse victim advocate is to be available to help, not to dictate what happens next. The victim will be empowered to make decisions that are best for them, and the advocate will keep them informed of their options and resources.

**Commanders or service-equivalent senior commanders** should see [DOD Instruction 6400.01, "Family Advocacy Program,"](#) Section 2.4.f.(1)-(5) for specific responsibilities and instructions.

## Honor — show respect and compassion

Abuse can happen to anyone of any age or rank and may occur for prolonged periods of time. It's important to show empathy for a wide range of victim experiences. It's also vital to not judge the victim or abuser. The victim needs help, no matter what next steps they choose. Abusers need help so they can change their behavior.

Other things to consider when speaking with victims include:

- That they may be experiencing a range of circumstances as a result of the isolation brought on by the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. This could include opportunities for abusers to exert other kinds of control, such as cyber monitoring.
- The fact that they may live and work off installations and may not have been exposed to on-installation resources and information.
- Victims may live in an isolated location, posing additional challenges to finding the right support options.
- That they need to feel supported in whatever course of action they determine is right for them.

Your installation FAP office can support and provide you with relevant information and resources to help you understand victim options and how best to manage different situations.

## Top 3 Things You Can Say to Help a Victim of Abuse

1. I take your concerns seriously. You are not alone in this.
2. A [FAP domestic abuse victim advocate](#) can help you document the abuse, make a safety plan and access military or civilian services.

3. I can follow up with you via phone or email to ensure you received all the services and support you need.

[Find Your Advocate](#)

Resources to help you assist victims include:

- Article — [Transitional Compensation: Help for Victims of Abuse](#)
- Article — [Getting Help for Domestic Abuse — Military Protection Orders Can Include Pets](#)
- Article — [Navigating Relationship Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- Article — [A Safe Space for Relationship Help: The Family Advocacy Program](#)
- Contact — [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#), 800-799-7233 (24/7)
- Contact — [Military OneSource](#), 800-342-9647 (24/7)

## Courage — educate to prevent abuse

It is up to leaders to create opportunities for victims to connect to resources that address abuse. You can set the tone and atmosphere within your unit or installation.

Make sure you are leading by example in showing compassion and support to victims. Also be sure that prevention resources such as alcohol treatment, financial counseling and healthy relationship counseling are understood and accessible to those in your unit. Encourage people to attend and use these programs. Other ways you can lead by example include:

- Support unit members who may be experiencing domestic abuse by checking in with them. Make it clear that domestic abuse is never the victim's fault — it is not a personal failing or sign of weakness.
- Model positive relationships and set an example to promote safety in the military and in personal life.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and the DOD participates as a way to raise awareness by promoting a service-wide campaign. Leaders need to encourage their service members and the entire military community to focus on prevention all year long.

Use the annually updated [Domestic Violence Awareness Month Toolkit](#) to find banners, flyers and posters to display around your installation. The toolkit also provides social media posts to use in October and beyond.

Share the following resources to help promote domestic violence awareness and prevention throughout your community.

- Landing page — [United to End Domestic Abuse](#)
- Article — [Understanding Confidential Non-Medical Counseling Services](#)

- Link — [Your installation's Family Advocacy Program](#)
- Blog — [When it Comes to Domestic Abuse, Be an Upstander, Not a Bystander](#)
- Contact — [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#), 800-799-7233 (24/7)
- Contact — [Military OneSource](#), 800-342-9647 (24/7)

It is your duty to be part of the solution: Respect, support and defend victims of domestic abuse.