

# Pentagon Personnel Pen Prevention Proclamation

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By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Elliott Fabrizio, Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Service members from each military branch joined together to sign the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Awareness Month Proclamation in the Pentagon courtyard, April 14.

The proclamation read "Whereas, the desire within the Department of Defense is for all personnel to live our values, therefore, I will step up and do my part to stop sexual assault."

The Department of Defense theme for 2014 Sexual Assault Awareness Month is "Live our values: Step Up to Stop Sexual Assault."

The event was held in conjunction with the Clothesline Project, an initiative that raises sexual assault awareness by facilitating the design of T-shirts that help educate others about sexual assault. The shirts will be on display throughout April.

Victim advocates and representatives spoke on the importance of educating the military community so they know what support is available.

"The victim advocate is the direct link between the victim and the available resources whether that be medical, legal or just someone to talk to," said Chief Ashley Gorham, victim advocate. "No matter who the victim is they will have someone to talk and connect with."

Victim advocates are present in each military service, and share the focus of helping those affected by sexual assault become survivors.

"The role of a victim advocate is unique," said Army Sgt. First Class Julie Hoke, a sexual assault response coordinator. "The journey they take with their clients is challenging, but rewarding. I have served as a victim advocate and the transformation is amazing. During the intake, you are meeting with a victim, but in the end, if all goes well, you are walking alongside a survivor."

Marine Corps Maj. Paul Greenberg, another victim advocate, said that early in his training, he thought the term 'survivor' was "a little overblown" for sexual assault victims; however, after recently learning his niece had been suicidal after being sexually assaulted, he said he feels that 'survivor' is the exact term to use.

Navy Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) Liz Blanc closed the event by challenging each person to look for ways to contribute to the prevention of sexual assault.

"What is it that each of you can do within your sphere of influence to honor the experiences of victims and the messages of support and hope that you see on these shirts today? What can we all do to make the SAPR program of the future the best, most effective and most accessible program that it can be so we can continue to take care of victims?"

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140414-N-ES994-109 WASHINGTON (April 14, 2014) Liz Blanc, the Navy's National Capitol Region sexual assault response coordinator, delivers remarks during the Pentagon Combined Services sexual assault awareness month proclamation signing at the Pentagon. The event also highlighted the Clothesline Project, an initiative to raise awareness about sexual assault. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Elliott Fabrizio/Released)

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