

What is *Suicide 101: Responding to Suicidal Ideation Among Survivors of Sexual Assault*?

Suicide 101: Responding to Suicidal Ideation Among Survivors of Sexual Assault is a self-guided, online, educational module for Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Victim Advocates (VAs) to assist in their work when supporting survivors managing suicidal ideation. This module explains how SARCs and SAPR VAs can leverage their existing skills, introduces tools for conducting a suicide risk assessment and identifying appropriate follow-up steps, as well as connecting survivors to long-term support resources for managing their suicidal ideation. The module can be completed anonymously, or SARCs and SAPR VAs looking for additional information on this topic can complete the course for one hour of D-SAACP credit.

Background

Research shows that more than one-quarter of active duty military survivors of sexual assault have had suicidal thoughts.¹ SARCs and SAPR VAs are uniquely qualified to identify, assess, and support survivors of sexual assault who have suicidal ideation, given their understanding of the challenges survivors face in a military setting, the rapport they create with survivors throughout their professional relationship, the regular contact they have with survivors they serve, and the confidential space they provide for discussing concerns.

This module was created to provide SARCs and SAPR VAs with the skills they need to support survivors who are managing suicidal ideation.

Goals of the Module

The instructional goals of *Suicide 101: Responding to Suicidal Ideation Among Survivors of Sexual Assault* include:

- Explain the connection between sexual assault, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.
- Apply existing skills to support survivors managing suicidal ideation.
- Conduct an assessment to determine the level of risk related to suicidal ideation.
- Evaluate the result of the risk assessment to identify appropriate next steps.
- Identify resources for long-term support.

¹<https://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Access-Cost-Quality-and-Safety/Health-Care-ProgramEvaluation/Survey-of-Health-Related-Behaviors/2011-Health-Related-Behavior-Survey-Active-Duty>

What Can I Expect When Participating in the Module?

The module consists of five self-paced units, and you can decide when you want to access the module. The entire course will take approximately one hour to complete.

Unit 1 - Connection (est. completion time 10 minutes)

Understanding the connection among sexual assault, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts is important for SARCs and SAPR VAs already supporting survivors in their community. This unit identifies best practice language for talking about suicide, describes the research on the connections between sexual assault, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts among Service members, and offers several facts to help you better understand suicide.

Unit 2 – Existing Skills (est. completion time 15 minutes)

As a SARC or SAPR VA, you are uniquely qualified to identify, assess, and support survivors of sexual assault managing suicidal ideation. This unit identifies key features of your role that lend to your ability to support survivors dealing with suicide, as well as underlines the limits to confidentiality that may exist when supporting survivors managing suicidal ideation. Understanding risk and protective factors related to suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, identifying invitations to discuss suicide, and asking direct questions are all important aspects of supporting a survivor who may be managing these feelings. The information presented is intended to help you better understand how and when to begin conversations about suicide with the survivors you serve.

Unit 3 – Risk Assessment (est. completion time 10 minutes)

The Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale is one of the most effective methods of asking direct questions about suicidal ideation in order to assess risk and can be used by all helping professionals. This unit identifies the six questions on the Columbia Scale, what they assess, and what to look for in a response. In addition, you will learn about the appropriate follow-up steps to take based on the responses to the questions and associated risk level of the individual you are working with.

Unit 4 – Next Steps (est. completion time 10 minutes)

This unit discusses safety planning as it should occur whenever a survivor shares suicidal ideation. You will explore how to support survivors as they create a suicide-specific safety plan, and how it can be used with survivors managing suicidal ideation.

Unit 5 - Resources (est. completion time 5 minutes)

This unit provides you with both military and non-military related resources to explore ongoing support around suicidal ideation. The information provided is meant to help expand your pool of long-term resources for supporting survivors.

How Can a User Access the Online Program?

Users can access all Safe Helpline Self-Paced Educational Programs anonymously at SafeHelpline.org/education or via the [Safe Helpline app](#). To take this course for one hour of D-SAACP continuing education credit, please visit [Safe Helpline's Education Portal](#).

What is DoD Safe Helpline?

The Department of Defense (DoD) [Safe Helpline](#) is the Department's sole secure, confidential, and anonymous crisis support service specially designed for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. Safe Helpline is available 24/7, worldwide. The DoD Safe Helpline staff provides live, one-on-one support to survivors, their families, and other DoD stakeholders. It is operated by [RAINN](#) (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), a national anti-sexual violence organization, through a contract with the [Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office](#) (DoD SAPRO).