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TITLE: Optimizing Human Resources to Address Battalion-Level Factors That May Impede or Support Implementation of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention Programs

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14. ABSTRACT Recent data indicates the 2018 prevalence of sexual assaults in active duty Service members was 6.8 percent of women and .7 percent of men with an estimated 1 in 3 reported to an authority (Department of Defense, 2019). Reporting rates appear to increase in 2018, but sexual assault prevalence rates have either increased (for women) or remained unchanged (for men) since 2016. The U.S. Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response & Prevention (SHARP) program currently focuses on reporting sexual harassment and assault incidents. The 2019-2023 Prevention Plan of Action (PPOA) recognizes that SHARP programs are effective in reporting, and recommends that DoD develop a similarly high quality prevention system. The PPOA-recommended system would take a research-based, integrative approach to prevention in the full range of military personnel, effectively implement practices with fidelity in supportive climates, and continuously evaluate prevention outcomes. DoD has selected Getting to Outcomes (GTO), a 10-step research-based model, to support prevention planning, implementation, and evaluation. In GTO Step 5, SHARP programs would need to assess their capacity to implement a prevention program and correct as needed. The PPOA identifies human resources as a key component of capacity to implement a prevention program, and details specific objectives for developing a prevention workforce. However, there is a potential disconnect between the high-level work of this future prevention workforce and on-the-ground implementation by local SHARP programs. In the U.S. Army, the SHARP program is implemented at the battalion level by Non-Commissions Officers (NCOs) who have SHARP assigned as a collateral duty, and are supported by Garrison-level and Installation level SHARP officers and staff.					
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1. **INTRODUCTION:** The primary objective of this two-year proposal is to determine the knowledge and skills needed to optimize the human resources needed for successful implementation of a future sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention program, and develop preliminary training modules using the model selected by the Department of Defense, Getting To Outcomes (GTO). The rationale for this proposal is that human resources are a key component of capacity to implement a sexual assault prevention program. However, there is currently limited attention to the knowledge and skills needed by personnel in the U.S. Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program, including Battalion Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) who have SHARP assigned as a collateral duty, and the Garrison-level and Installation level SHARP officers and staff who support those NCOs. We hypothesize that supplementing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) program with military-specific knowledge and skills will result in enhanced adoption, implementation, and sustainability of evidence-based sexual assault and harassment programs. For example, SHARP personnel need training to (1) assess the fit of a program with the unit context, (2) assess capacity of a unit to implement the program, (3) build relationships and create a supportive environment for change, (4) help to change the system and the structures and processes that support it, (5) transfer knowledge and skills and create infrastructure support for ongoing learning, (6) plan and lead change efforts, and (7) create infrastructure for program monitoring. A total of 48-72 interviews will be conducted during the project, with 24-36 in year 1 and 24-36 in year 2. Preliminary training modules will be developed in year 2.

2. **KEYWORDS:** Implementation Science, Human Resources, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Training, Interviews, Qualitative Research, Readiness for Change

3. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

a. **What were the major goals of the project?**

- i. Goal 1: Hiring and Training Study Staff
- ii. Goal 2: Regulatory approval from all IRB's and HRPO
- iii. Goal 3: Determine gaps in knowledge and skills for SHARP personnel
- iv. Goal 4: Determine how to fill gaps in knowledge and skills at Installation-level, Garrison-level, and Battalion-level
- v. Goal 5: Present and disseminate findings

b. **What was accomplished under these goals?**

i. **Major Activities:**

1. Regulatory Approval
2. Staffing
3. Interviews
4. Data analysis
5. Dissemination

ii. **Specific objectives:**

1. Local and HRPO IRB Approval
2. Hiring for Study Coordinator & Graduate Research Assistant
3. Conduct Interviews: Develop Round 1 Interview Guide, conduct interviews for installation-level, garrison-level, and collateral-duty SHARP personnel:
4. Data Analysis: Achieve saturation and determine preliminary themes
5. Dissemination: Advisory board and DOD stakeholders

iii. Significant results:

1. Local and HRPO IRB Approval obtained (Exempt)
2. Hiring was completed for the study coordinator and graduate research assistant. However, the study coordinator left for a clinical position in September. We are re-posting the position.
3. Interviews are ongoing. We have interviewed 50% of our year 1 goal. Delay was based on challenges gaining access to the SHARP personnel as described below. However, we are now actively recruiting and interviewing. Despite the loss of our study coordinator, we expect to reach our recruitment goal by the end of CY2021.
 - a. We completed the Round 1 interview guide and revised the guide following two interviews with our initial SHARP contacts at Ft. Gordon (Appendix A).
 - b. We learned during our preliminary interviews that our SHARP contacts were only the Ft. Gordon leads for the Army hospital, not the installation. We connected with the installation-level leads who provided us with a contact list. During the recruitment process, it became clear that our contact list does not include collateral-duty SHARP personnel. We are currently requesting referrals from the Garrison-level SHARP personnel. Regarding Garrison-level SHARP personnel, we are approaching saturation
 - c. We found that Ft. Gordon has both Navy and USMC SAPR personnel. We have included those personnel in our study and revised the interview guide to account for the non-SHARP personnel. This is a strength because it will enhance generalizability of findings beyond the U.S. Army.
 - d. We have been actively working to recruit additional sites, but to date have not been successful. We will continue to pursue leads through the Spring.
4. Data Analysis: We have identified four preliminary themes from the Round 1 interviews (Appendix B)
5. Dissemination
 - a. Kick-off meeting with Military Advisory Board completed. Key contacts were Nancy Skopp at JBLM, Beverly Fortson at DoD SAPRO, and COL Christopher Engen at the US Army SHARP Academy. Further, we have representatives from the other military services. We expect our key contacts to help us gain access to research participants at other sites as requested during our scientific review. We expect the representatives from other military services to provide feedback about the likely transferability of our results to other services.
 - b. Headquarters, Department of the Army: We are actively collaborating with Dr. Eren Watkins, the new Prevention Specialist who is working to address recommendations from the SECDEFs IRC report regarding how to enact guidance related to the Army's prevention workforce.

iv. Other achievements.

1. We are developing a collaboration with RAND, and specifically the co-developer of the Getting To Outcomes model upon which this study is based. We proposed a planning grant to CDMRP to develop a clinical trial to test the impact of training SHARP personnel in Getting To Outcomes, with a specific focus on differences between Installation-level, Garrison-level, and Collateral Duty SHARP personnel, the focus of this study.

c. What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

- i. *Nothing to Report*

d. How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?

- i. *Nothing to Report*

e. What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

- i. Complete Round 1 interviews by end of CY2021
- ii. Complete rapid data analysis and present results to Military Advisory Board in February 2022
- iii. Develop Round 2 interview guide by end of February 2022
- iv. Complete Round 2 interviews by end of May 2022
- v. Complete data analysis by August 2022
- vi. Present results to Military Advisory Board in September 2022
- vii. Complete Training modules by Sep 30 2022

4. IMPACT:

a. What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?

- i. *Nothing to Report*

b. What was the impact on other disciplines?

- i. *Nothing to Report*

c. What was the impact on technology transfer?

- i. *Nothing to Report*

d. What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?

- i. *Nothing to Report*

5. CHANGES/PROBLEMS:

a. Changes in approach and reasons for change

- i. *We agreed to try to recruit additional sites based on reviewer comments. However, we are having difficulty accessing other sites. We have been currently trying to access (1) Ft. Benning, and (2) obtain contacts through the SHARP academy. Ft. Benning is advantageous because we learned that RAND is contracted to provide GTO training there. This would provide a good comparison to Ft. Gordon due to differences in training and also differences in mission (i.e., signal versus combat arms). We have asked the SHARP academy to provide contact information for SHARP program managers (PM) who have completed their new prevention training. This also is an advantage in that we will have very current information regarding gaps in knowledge and skills.*
- ii. We have added Navy and USMC personnel as interviewees after learning that they are affiliated with the Ft Gordon SHARP program. Interviews will enhance generalizability of results beyond the U.S. Army.

b. Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them

- i. *IRB approval was completed at the beginning of summer which delayed initial interviews due to extended annual leave. Further, we realized during discussions that the SHARP contacts only had authority over the hospital. We are now in contact with the Ft Gordon installation-level PM.*
- ii. As noted above, reviewers asked us to expand beyond Ft. Gordon. A challenge is that we do not have existing contacts at other installations. We plan to continue to work with the SHARP academy to make contacts with SHARP personnel at other installations. We can resolve this in two ways. First, we will interview additional staff at Ft. Gordon to ensure that we meet our interview goals. Second, we will continue recruitment throughout the study period and if we obtain access to other site(s) we will request a no-cost extension as needed to complete additional interviews.

c. Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures

- i. Q1: Delays in hiring study coordinator (Feb 2021 start date) and graduate research assistant (June 2021 start date). Anticipate graduate research assistant hire in Summer 2021. Received approval to hire summer intern using hiring lag funds.

d. Significant changes in use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents

e. Significant changes in use or care of human subjects. Nothing to Report

f. Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals. N/A

g. Significant changes in use of biohazards and/or select agents. N/A

6. PRODUCTS:

○ **Publications, conference papers, and presentations**

Nothing to Report

○ **Website(s) or other Internet site(s)**

Nothing to Report

○ **Technologies or techniques**

Nothing to Report

○ **Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses**

Nothing to Report

○ **Other Products**

Nothing to Report

7. PARTICIPANTS & OTHER COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

○ **What individuals have worked on the project?**

• Name:	• Benzer, Justin K
• Project Role:	• <i>PI</i>
• Researcher Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5151-2127
• Nearest person month worked:	• 3 person-months per calendar year
• Contribution to Project:	• <i>Dr. Benzer is responsible for the design and oversight of the project.</i>
• Funding Support:	• <i>N/A</i>

• Name:	• Creech, Suzannah
• Project Role:	• <i>Co-I</i>
• Researcher Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	• https://orcid.org/0000-0001-682-1673
• Nearest person month worked:	• 2.4 person-months per calendar year

• Contribution to Project:	• <i>Dr. Creech is the lead qualitative researcher.</i>
• Funding Support:	• <i>N/A</i>

• Name:	• Claborn, Kasey
• Project Role:	• <i>Co-I</i>
• Researcher Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	• https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8415-3869
• Nearest person month worked:	• 1.44 person-months per calendar year
• Contribution to Project:	• <i>Dr. Claborn is the secondary qualitative researcher</i>
• Funding Support:	• <i>N/A</i>

- **Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?**
 - *Nothing to Report*
- **What other organizations were involved as partners?**
 - **Organization Name:** Fort Gordon
 - **Location of Organization:** GA
 - **Partner's contribution to the project**
 - **Collaboration**

8. SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- **COLLABORATIVE AWARDS:** *N/A*
- **QUAD CHARTS:** *No change to quad chart*

9. APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Interview Guide

The overall intent of this interview is to determine the knowledge and skills SHARP personnel currently possess that can be used to implement a future sexual assault prevention program. The long-term goal of this project is to develop a training program to strengthen the capability of SHARP personnel to implement sexual assault training programs.

The target population for these interviews are (1) installation-level SHARP personnel, (2) garrison-level SHARP personnel, and (3) battalion-level SHARP personnel. Interviews may be conducted with commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers, and DoD-employed civilians. The first interview will ask about knowledge and skills related to (1) assessing the characteristics of the unit-level context, (2) assessing and enhancing capacity to support program implementation, (3) planning program implementation, and (4) facilitating program implementation. The second interview will investigate the gaps in knowledge and skills identified in the first interview in order to determine whether these gaps should be filled at the installation level, garrison level, or battalion-level.

This agenda is intended to guide interviewers through the key content areas of data collection for the individual interviews with participants. While the agenda is used to guide the discussion, it is not a rigid script that will be adhered to verbatim. This ensures that the interviewers gather data on the same topics in each interview session, while also allowing them the flexibility to adapt and clarify questions to suit the needs of different individuals. Similarly, questions need not be asked in this particular order. Rather, the interviewers will adapt the conversation as needed according to the narrative within each interview session, pursuing both the a priori research topics as well as any emergent relevant themes that evolve from the discussion.

MATERIALS

- Telephone, 2 audio recorders, a laptop, paper, pens, interview guide

Welcome

1. Thank you for meeting with me.
2. This interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes. This study is funded by the Department of Defense. The goal is to help identify training needs for improving the SHARP program. We will be asking about some areas where you may have very little knowledge or experience. That is completely ok. We are not evaluating you, your unit, or your installation. We are only asking for your assistance in developing a useful training program. If there are questions you are uncomfortable answering, we can skip them.
3. This interview is completely voluntary.
 - Audio recording: We will be audio recording this interview and taking notes. This helps me to remember what you say.
 - *Privacy/confidentiality*
 - We will use the audio recording to type up the interview. Once this is done, we will remove names or any identifying information, delete the audio recording. At that point, there will be no record of you participating in the interview. No one in your chain of command will know what you say in the interview. It is completely confidential. Only members of the research team here at the University of Texas will have access to the audio file. The Department of Defense may access research records as part of its human subjects protection oversight activities.
 - *Withdrawal*
 - You are free to end this interview at any time. You will not be penalized in any way.

4. Do you have any questions before we begin?

BEGIN AUDIO RECORDING NOW

Interview 1: Assessing knowledge and skills

Intent: The intent of this interview guide is to determine gaps in knowledge and skills to assess the characteristics of the unit-level context (GTO Step 4), assess and enhance capacity to support program implementation (GTO Step 5), plan program implementation (GTO Step 6), and facilitate program implementation.

Question 1: Can you tell us a little bit about your role in the SHARP program?

Probes:

1. How long have you been in the SHARP program?
2. How much time do you typically spend in a week on the SHARP program?
3. What is your experience implementing new SHARP training programs?

Next, we will discuss a hypothetical training program. This example training is based on several training programs that currently exist. Do you have the summary that I provided to you earlier?

If yes, read the paragraph below. If no, read the paragraph and then read the training summary.

The training would start with a gender-specific module. For them men, the training would present male-on-male sexual assault to teach male soldiers how sexual assault feels from the survivor's perspective. Then help the male soldiers make connections between what they just learned the experience of women. For the women, the training would focus entirely on male-on –female sexual assault. All soldiers would then learn about the obstacles to reporting and receive training on specific skills. They would learn to recognize the types of behaviors associated with sexual assault and how to recognize potential dangerous or harmful situations. They would role model strategies for confronting other soldiers who tell jokes about rape, act in ways that demean women, or brag about abusing women. Finally, they would learn how to involve others in fixing the problem.

Training Summary

1. Connect to the experience of male-on-male sexual assault for men, and male-on-female sexual assault for women
2. Increase understanding of what sexual assault survivors feel
3. Learn about the obstacles to reporting
4. Recognize harassing behaviors
5. Recognize potentially dangerous situations
6. Role play how to confront other soldiers
7. Learn how to involve others

Question 2: What might be some challenges to implementing this training in your (battalion/brigade/installation)?

Probes:

- a. Would leaders be supportive?
- b. Why might the training fail to change behaviors?
- c. Would male soldiers be open to the training?
- d. Would female soldiers be open to the training?
- e. How would this fit in with your existing SHARP programs?

Question 3 (Fit): Imagine that you have been asked to implement this training. How would you determine whether your (battalion/brigade/installation) is ready for the training or not?

Probes: Review the challenges presented for Question 2.

Question 4 (Implement): If DoD selected this sexual assault prevention training course, what could you do to ensure a successful implementation?

Probes

- a. How would you interact with your (battalion/brigade/installation) leadership?
- b. How would you interact with other SHARP personnel?
- c. How would you evaluate the training?

Question 5 (Capacity): How would you go about determining what resources you need to implement the training?

Probes:

- a. Number of SHARP personnel
- b. Training for SHARP personnel (e.g., communication, conflict resolution)
- c. Readiness of soldiers to participate
- d. Leadership commitment
- e. Evaluation to determine what about the training was successful and what needs more work
- f. Coordination with community resources

Next, I would like you to think about the long-term goal of creating an environment where everyone agrees that violence will not be tolerated and everyone is expected to contribute to making a safe environment.

Question 6 (Ongoing learning): If you were provided the training needed to lead the sexual assault training, what could you do to build on that training and move your (battalion/brigade/installation) closer to an environment where violence will not be tolerated and everyone contributes to sexual assault safety?

Probes

- a. Refresher training

Question 7 (Change): What about your (battalion/brigade/installation) needs to be changed in order to create an environment where violence will not be tolerated and everyone contributes to sexual assault safety?

Question 8 (Lead): What could you do to lead the change needed to create an environment where violence will not be tolerated and everyone contributes to sexual assault safety?

Question 9 (Relationships): How would you go about getting the support would you need to get your (battalion/brigade/installation) ready to create an environment where violence will not be tolerated and everyone contributes to sexual assault safety?

Probes:

- a. How would you ensure that you get the support you need from SHARP program leadership?
- b. How do you keep battalion/brigade/installation leadership engaged?
- c. How would you ensure that battalion/brigade/installation leadership are committed?
- d. How could you work with other battalions/brigades/installations?

Question 10 (Evaluation): How would you evaluate whether your (battalion/brigade/installation) is improving in terms of creating an environment where violence will not be tolerated and everyone contributes to sexual assault safety?

Probes:

- a. What resources would you need?

Round 2: Interview questions will be developed to target each of the gaps in knowledge and skills identified in Round 1. Questions will probe into why each gap is best filled with Installation-level SHARP personnel, Garrison-level SHARP personnel, or Battalion-level SHARP personnel.

Appendix B: Preliminary Themes

1. Collateral-duty VAs may strengthen leadership support and program fit. Garrison-level SARC and VAs identify leadership buy-in as the number one factor of a SH/SA prevention program's success and longevity. However, a common theme was the struggle to maintain this buy-in. One participant summarized this as *"Cultural buy in, command buy in and training are all essential. To get buy-in from higher ups, it would be very hard."* In contrast, we found that the Collateral-Duty VAs have direct knowledge of their unit's specific needs and workplace climate. The Collateral-Duty VAs may also have the potential to inform the best cultural fit for potential EBPs (GTO Step 1). Training for collateral-Duty VAs might focus on improving relationships between the SHARP program and soldiers, and how to more effectively engage local leaders (GTO Step 5).

2. Collateral-Duty VAs may Assist in Evaluation and Improvement. The Battalion-level, collateral-duty VAs interviewed believe in the importance of SHARP program evaluation but lack the expertise and skills to formally collect or analyze outcome-based data. Instead, they use informal data to gauge program success such as audience feedback or observations of their unit over time. To better collaborate with Garrison-level and Installation-level SARCs the quality of the implementation (GTO Steps 6 & 7), collateral-duty personnel might be formally trained in outcome evaluation and improvement methods (GTO Steps 8 & 9).

3. Collateral-Duty VAs may Benefit from Exposure to National and Community Resources. Garrison-level SARCs and VAs have good knowledge of community and national resources (GTO Step 1). However, collateral-duty SHARP personnel at the battalion level may have little awareness of available resources and instead may overly rely on the lived experiences of themselves or others to give information during SHARP programming.

4. Interpersonal and Presentation Skills may be Broadly Important. Across all three levels, interviews emphasized the importance of engaging SHARP programming that captures audience attention and spurs engagement and imagination. Key informants highlighted the importance of helping the audience to connect with the message content. While emphasizing the importance of interpersonal and presentation skills, SHARP personnel state they have little to no formal training in these areas. These roles which require presentation and small group facilitation should receive continued support and professional development to leverage the connections and trust they already have with their individual units (GTO Step 5).