

Focus Group Informed Consent

We are researchers with RAND, an independent, nonprofit, federally funded policy research organization that serves the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

We have been asked by the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to assess DoD's efforts for providing harassment response resources for servicemembers. The study has two objectives: 1) to identify which support services and forms of assistance should be available to service member complainants of any form of harassment, including whether or not the current workforce is effectively structured to meet the needs of those service members; and 2) to determine what, if any, additional services and support may be required by military personnel reporting sexual harassment (SH) and identify the most appropriate Department of Defense (DoD) personnel, policies, and practices to meet those needs.

Our goal through these focus groups is to learn about your perspective on how harassment is addressed in your service, any thoughts and suggestions for resources that should be available to victims, and what barriers may exist to reporting harassment or receiving care if you are a victim of harassment. The focus group should last approximately an hour.

Please keep in mind that we are not asking individuals to provide their own experiences with harassment, and we ask that you do not do so. Although we will not ask about individual experiences, there is a potential risk of distress, based on the subject matter, or on you or another participant disclosing experiences with harassment. In addition, it is possible that someone may feel obligated to report information discussed in the group or that someone may face retaliation or be seen negatively for speaking disapprovingly about a supervisor or others. To minimize these risks, please do not include names of individuals or supervisors or provide any information that could put you in jeopardy. You will not directly benefit from participation, but your responses will help DoD in their review of policies and procedures.

Your participation is voluntary and you can decline to answer any of the questions. In other words, you can skip any questions you do not want to answer. You may opt-out at any time. We will not be sharing your name with anyone outside this focus group. We ask that you maintain confidentiality about everything being discussed today and of the identities of other participants. Although we ask this of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee that all participants will maintain one another's confidentiality.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. We are strictly interested in learning about your perspectives and observations. Our job today is not to provide you with information, but to learn from your perspectives and experiences. Because of this, you should not assume that everything you hear today is an accurate reflection of policies. We encourage you to consult your Service's and the DoD's policies, regulations, and instructions on harassment for the most accurate and up to date information. A resource list is available for you in the chat. We will be taking notes during the interview, but we will not record any names in our notes, and we will not show our notes to anyone outside of RAND. Our notes will inform our analysis for DoD leaders to develop and implement policies and programs. Any quotations or other specific interview data used in the final report will be identified only by generic descriptors. No one will be identified by name.

If you have any questions, comments, or want to provide additional information, you can contact the project leaders, Dr. Kyleanne Hunter (at 310-393-0411x6113 or khunter@rand.org) or Dr. Miriam Matthews (at 703-413-1100 x5222 or matthews@rand.org). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or need to report a research-related injury or concern, you can contact RAND's Human Subjects Protection Committee toll-free at (866) 697-5620 or by emailing hspcinfo@rand.org. If possible, when you contact the Committee, please reference Study #2022-N0422.

Additionally, we also want to emphasize to you that this is not an official channel for reporting abuse, discrimination, or misconduct. If you would like to talk to someone about any abuse, discrimination, or misconduct in order to get help or file an official report, you should contact one of the following directly: someone in your chain of command, a chaplain, a medical provider, the Equal Opportunity (EO) Counselor, the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), or a Victim Advocate.

Are there any questions before we begin?