

U.S. Marine Corps Commander/Sergeant Major Interview Guide

ETAC T2: Evaluation of the USMC Commandant's Cornerstone
Pre-Command Sexual Assault Prevention and Response and Integrated Prevention
Training

Participant ID:	Date:
Interviewer:	Note Takers:
Start Time:	End Time:

[Time allotted: 30 minutes.]

Welcome, Introduction & Agreement to Participate [7 Minutes]

Welcome & Introductions [3 Minutes]

[Lead Interviewer to remain on video for the duration of the interview. Support staff to show video briefly during introductions.]

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is [Interviewer Name]. My colleagues, [Note taker 1 Name] and [Note taker 2 Name] are also joining this call to take notes on the topics we discuss. We work for the objective, nonpartisan research organization, NORC at the University of Chicago.

While we are getting started **can you confirm that you can hear me and see me clearly?**

[Interviewer to confirm also that s/he can hear participant clearly.]

- ☐ Yes [Continue with survey]
- ☐ No [Offer technical assistance as needed]

Thank you. For some background: the Department of Defense (DoD) has contracted with NORC to support the evaluation of the U.S. Marine Corps Cornerstone Pre-Command Sexual Assault Prevention and Response and Integrated Prevention Training (referred to later as the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training). NORC is conducting interviews with a small group of Marine Officers to improve the survey instrument that will be used to evaluate this Training. The purpose of today's interview is to get your candid feedback on some of the questions we have drafted to ensure these questions are easy to understand and respond to.

We will aim to keep this interview to 30 minutes.

Agreement to Participate [2 Minutes]

Before we start, I want to walk you through your rights as an interview participant and seek your agreement to participate.

[In your own words or reading below, please make the following points; it is important to use plain language here.]

- First, our OMB Control Number is 0704-0644 with expiration date 1/31/2026. [Interviewer paste info into chat]: AGENCY DISCLOSURE NOTICE: *The public reporting burden for this collection of information, 0704-0644, is estimated to average 30 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or burden reduction suggestions to the Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, at whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dd-dod-information-collections@mail.mil. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.*
- Second, this interview is completely voluntary. You may opt out at any time without penalty, including **skipping questions** or **stopping the interview**.
- Next, all answers that you give will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.
 - Under the law, we must report to the proper authorities if you tell us you are planning to **cause serious harm to yourself or others**.
- Finally, de-identified results of the feedback you provide today may be shared with the USMC leadership, SAPR staff, and DoD VPC/SAPRO. De-identified means that we will **share findings in aggregate without sharing names of who said what**ⁱ.

If you have questions about this project, you can contact the NORC Project Director Dr. Bruce Taylor. I will add his contact information to the chat.

[Interviewer paste info to Teams/Zoom chat]: NORC Project Director Dr. Bruce Taylor. email: taylor-bruce@norc.org, phone: (301) 351-7167; or the NORC Project Team at USMC-SAPR-IPP-Eval@norc.org.

Do you have any questions?

- ☐ Yes [Answer respondent questions]
- ☐ No [Continue]

Do you **agree to participate** in this interview?

- ☐ Yes I agree to participate. [Continue]
- ☐ No I do not agree to participate. [Thank individual and end discussion]

Overview [3 Minutes]

Great, thank you! Today we'll be speaking about the Pre-Command SAPR and Integrated Prevention Training, or SAPR IP Training as we'll refer to it, which you completed about five to six months ago.

I know this was a while ago, but do you remember this training?

[If **yes**, summarize the following text; if **no**, read the following text]

The Pre-Command SAPR IP Training was held during the Commandant's Cornerstone Training Program. It entailed a 45-minute classroom briefing followed by 90-minute small group discussion on topics of integrated primary prevention, prevention of harmful behaviors, promotion of protective factors, and

prevention of and response to sexual assault. This training was intended to emphasize leadership's role and responsibility for establishing healthy commands, to understand the impact of harmful behaviors, and to support a member with a lived experience of sexual assault. Trainees also received a SAPR Leadership Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual, which complements principles learned in the Training and allows leaders to quickly reference SAPR program information.

[Probe for command placement to inform question wording below]

Before we begin, I want to confirm that you are a [Sergeant Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel]?

Also, are you now in a Command position? Or are you still waiting to take Command or still waiting for your Command assignment?

Finally, can you tell us a little more about how long you've served in the military?

Understood, thank you.

Main Discussion Guide [22 Minutes]

[Priority questions are denoted ***]

In the questions that follow, I will be asking you about your experience with the SAPR IP Training and your attitudes about preventing and responding to harmful behaviors. When I say 'harmful behaviors,' I am referring to self-directed harm and harmful acts, such as sexual assault, harassment, retaliation, suicide, domestic abuse, and child abuse. To be clear, these questions are in reference to the 2-hour SAPR IP Training, and not the 2-week Cornerstone Training.

General Attitudes about the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training [5 Minutes]

1. ***What was your **overall impression** of the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training?
 - a. ***What was valuable to you? What did you get out of it?
 - b. ***What parts of the Training were new for you?
 - c. Which parts of the training were confusing, could be framed differently, or could be improved?
 - d. Overall, how useful did you find the Training?
 - i. Probe: Were key concepts/points repeated?
 - ii. Probe: Were realistic learning scenarios presented?
 - iii. Probe: Did the training connect with your prior life experiences?
 - iv. Probe: Were you shown how the training was relevant and could be applied in your work?
 - e. [If in command]***Based on your experience since you took command, was there content or instruction you now feel was missing and should be added to the Training?

Post-Training Intentions and Behaviors [10 Minutes]

2. ***How **confident** do you feel that harmful behaviors can be prevented under your leadership?
 - a. ***Is your level of confidence different from how you felt prior to the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training?
 - b. Probe: What, specifically, in the Training influenced your level of confidence?
 - c. Probe [if not 100% confident]: What makes you feel that harmful behaviors might be unpreventable under your leadership?

3. ***Going forward, how **prepared** do you feel to coordinate with prevention personnel to implement and engage in activities to *prevent* harmful behaviors?
 - a. Probe: What has influenced your feelings of being/not being prepared?
4. ***How did the Training **prepare you** to oversee (or support) activities to *respond* to a harmful event, including sexual assault?
5. What additional support do you need to put what you learned in the Training into practice?
 - a. Probe: Would additional staff, follow-on technical support, training boosters, experiential learning opportunities or something else be helpful? Are there specific content area(s)?
6. *[If in Command/Command Leadership]:* ***Are there ways that you have sought to prevent and address harmful behaviors within your unit? (PROMPTS: Coordination with prevention/SAPR staff? Any informal approaches? What about formal actions?)
 - b. If yes, please explain.
7. *[If No action, or not yet in Command/Command Leadership]:* ***What are the ways you expect to work to prevent harmful behaviors within your unit, going forward? (PROMPTS: Coordination with prevention/SAPR staff? Any informal efforts? What about formal actions?)

Future Modifications to the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training [5 Minutes]

8. ***What else would you like to share about preventing harmful behaviors, (including sexual assault), or the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training that we have not already discussed?
 - c. Probe: What else would you like to share about *responding* to harmful behaviors, (including responding to sexual assault)?
9. ***What recommendations do you have for different ways – other than the Training – to support leaders to be effective in **preventing** harmful behaviors? What about ways to support leaders to be effective in **responding** to harmful behaviors?

[If there is time remaining, ask the following questions about pre-Training attitudes & experiences. If not, move to the Closing.]

Attitudes and Experiences Prior to Training [5 Minutes; if time remains]

Thank you very much for the answers you have provided so far. With our time left, I want to ask you a few questions about your prior experiences.

10. ***Before completing the Training, to what extent, did you think sexual assault is a problem in the USMC, and why?
11. ***During your pre-command experience, how had leaders around you treated the topic of **preventing harmful behaviors** including sexual assault?
 - a. Probes: What was done to address this problem and prevent harmful behaviors within the command?
12. During your pre-command experience, how had leaders around you **responded** after a harmful behavior or incident and/or **worked to rebuild a healthy command climate** after an event like that occurred?
 - d. Probes: In what way did they show support for response and rebuilding a healthy command climate after the incident?

Thank you for telling me a bit about your prior experiences.

Closing [1 Minute]

This completes our questions. Thank you, again, for participating in this interview with NORC. We want to reassure you that your responses will be held in strict confidence, and no one within USMC or other parts of the DoD will know who has participated. Your perspectives are invaluable in helping us better understand the effectiveness of the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training.

Do you have any additional questions for us?

[If yes, answer to the best of your ability.]

[If no [further] questions]: This concludes our interview. Thank you again for your time today.

[END INTERVIEW]

[NORC staff to refer to end of interview checklist]

ⁱ Display note: Disclosure of this information is voluntary and will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-Command SAPR IP Training. When completed, this form contains personally identifiable information and is protected by the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended.