



# UNITED STATES AIR FORCE SPECIAL VICTIMS' COUNSEL PROGRAM

- The Air Force (AF) Special Victims' Counsel (SVC) Program was implemented on 28 January 2013 as an important step forward in AF efforts to provide world class response capabilities to victims. SVCs advocate and succeed in shaping the military justice landscape by ensuring that victims are treated with dignity and respect on a case basis in investigation, pre-trial, trial and post-trial matters and in the larger legal landscape by filing amicus curiae briefs in the Court of Appeals of the Armed Forces.
- Currently, 30 SVCs and 3 Senior SVCs are located at 25 installations world-wide.
- **1501** sexual assault victims requested and were assigned an SVC since program implementation.
  - 79% of clients are AF Active Duty. SVCs are also representing dependents, AF Reserve and Air National Guard (Title 10) members, other Service members, and qualifying OCONUS civilians.
  - SVCs began representing child victims of Article 120b offenses on 24 Jun 2014 and now represent 34 victims.
  - SVCs have attended and represented clients in 285 Article 32 hearings and 225 courts-martial.
  - SVCs have attended and represented clients in over 2,236 interviews with investigators, defense counsel, and trial counsel.
- In FY14, SVCs represented victims in 86% of Unrestricted Reports.
- The AF JAG Corps has implemented a Victim Impact Survey that SVC-represented sexual assault victims have the opportunity to complete:
  - 91% indicated they are "extremely satisfied" with the advice and support SVC provided during the Article 32 hearing and court-martial.
  - 99% would recommend other victims request an SVC.
  - 95% indicated their SVC advocated effectively on their behalf.
  - 97% indicated their SVC helped them understand the investigation and court-martial processes.
- Examples of feedback from victims:
  - "My case was particularly lengthy and without the guidance and support of my SVC the difficulty working through the process and testifying in the 32 hearing would have been extremely stressful to face alone--in the dark. My SVC provided insight, a source of strength and encouragement and without my SVC I wholeheartedly do not feel I would have been able to handle the stress or process on my own."
  - "He was very informative; made sure that I was kept in the loop with what was going on, helped me obtain mental health services at other than my home base, spoke with my Commander and First Sergeant when necessary on my behalf. Their [SVC] main concern is the victim, providing necessary information and help when needed. My SVC made sure to ask me what it was I was hoping for and what I wanted to do about the assault. He made sure that I was aware of my rights and protected my interests."
  - Quote of an SVC on representing victims: "After a lengthy investigation process and trial where my client had to take the stand and talk about this incredibly personal and invasive thing that happened to her, she did not get the result she had hoped for – she was devastated. Initially I felt like I had failed her. However, shortly after the trial her husband approached me. He told me how much having me there meant to his wife. That she felt she had a voice in the system and the court listened to her, that she had someone to call with questions that someone was in her corner. He thanked me, then took a step back and saluted me, not because customs and courtesies required it, but as a sign of gratitude. It was an incredibly moving moment and it was then that I realized this program isn't about outcomes, it is about people – victims' rights are not about ensuring a conviction, they are about promoting respect, dignity, and meaningful participation in the justice system."