

Why GAO Did This Study

In September 2012, following investigations for alleged sexual assaults during basic training, an Air Force Commander-directed report made 46 recommendations intended to better prevent sexual assaults during basic training. Congress mandated that GAO review the Air Force's efforts to implement the recommendations and lessons learned to better prevent and respond to sexual assault incidents among the services.

This report examines the extent to which (1) the Air Force implemented the recommendations to better prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assault during basic training and evaluated the effectiveness of actions taken and (2) the military services have a process to share lessons learned and have data to oversee their efforts to prevent sexual assault and related misconduct during initial military training. GAO analyzed the Commander's report, DOD policies, annual reports on efforts to improve the Air Force's program, and surveys, and met with officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the Air Force establish an oversight framework to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions, the military services formalize CORBT's role and include key stakeholders, and the services develop or leverage existing military training surveys to provide more comprehensive and detailed data. DOD concurred with the first three recommendations but partially concurred with the last, citing a need for more analysis. GAO continues to believe the recommendation is valid as discussed in this report.

View [GAO-14-806](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Needs to Take Further Actions to Prevent Sexual Assault during Initial Military Training

What GAO Found

The Air Force implemented most recommendations from the 2012 Commander's report intended to better prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assaults and related misconduct during the Air Force's basic training for new enlisted personnel, but it has not evaluated the effectiveness of its actions. GAO found that as of July 2014, of the 46 recommendations, the Air Force implemented 39, partially implemented 6, and did not implement 1. The Air Force established a council to provide senior leadership and oversight of actions taken in response to those recommendations. However, the Air Force has not fully established an oversight framework to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the recommendations. Key practices for organizational change call for using a results-oriented framework to enable program oversight and for the framework to include performance goals. Without fully establishing an oversight framework for evaluating the effectiveness of its actions to prevent sexual assault during basic training, the Air Force will not know whether to sustain the efforts it has implemented or undertake different actions.

Most military services share lessons learned through the Council on Recruit Basic Training (CORBT) and collect selected information to oversee their efforts, but do not have comprehensive, detailed data about sexual assault and related misconduct during initial military training, which includes basic and subsequent career training. CORBT was established in 2013 to address a variety of topics to improve basic training. Key practices for interagency collaboration include clearly defining roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in formalized guidance. However, the draft charter for CORBT does not identify the council's role as the forum for discussing sexual assault prevention for the entire range of initial military training. Further, it does not include key stakeholders who are critical to the success of sharing lessons learned on prevention of sexual assault and misconduct, such as the Marine Corps and service representatives responsible for sexual harassment. Without formalizing this role and involving key stakeholders, the Department of Defense (DOD) cannot ensure that the council is the most effective mechanism for sharing lessons learned for better prevention and response to sexual assault during initial military training. Also, three services have taken steps to obtain more comprehensive and detailed data that are specific to initial military training and provide better information about unreported misconduct for oversight, but these efforts vary by service. Further, none of the services have detailed data for both their basic and subsequent training environments. For example, the Air Force has a survey administered during basic training and the Navy has a survey given during subsequent career training. The Army has an annual survey but plans to develop a more comprehensive survey for basic training. The Marine Corps obtains information through leadership meetings with groups of recruits but does not have a formalized survey. Without developing or leveraging existing surveys about sexual assault and misconduct that can occur during initial military training, service officials may not have the comprehensive and detailed data needed to improve their sexual assault and sexual misconduct prevention programs. Further, military training leadership may have difficulty in determining the corrective actions that could best address remaining challenges in preventing sexual assault within initial military training.