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Centering Student Voices

Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault & Stalking (DVSAS) on Campus:

Toolkit for Supporting Military-Connected Students (Fall 2023)



CAMPUS
Technical Assistance
and Resource Project



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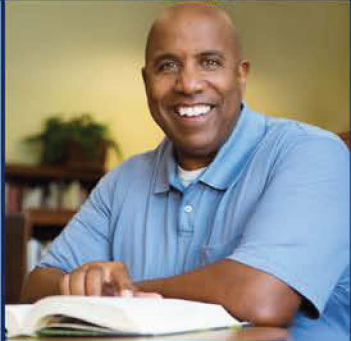


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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this toolkit is to inform and assist college and university administration, staff, and students with addressing Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking (DVSAS) and support services for military-connected students of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Colleges and Universities must make an active effort to learn about **who** encompasses “military-connected students,” **what** unique dynamics and barriers they experience, and **how** to provide accessible support services to this population, specifically pertaining to DVSAS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the Culturally Specific Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Provider, the National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) is honored to present the *Centering Student Voices Toolkit Series*, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Campus Program. The intention of this project is to center the voices and needs of historically marginalized populations to include, immigrant students, LGBTQIA+ students, military-connected students, and students with disabilities.

The content for this toolkit was developed in part from the brave military-connected students who shared their personal experiences, perceptions, and DVSAS experiences during listening sessions hosted by NOVA. We are sincerely grateful for the students who made this possible.

The U.S. Armed Forces

The U.S. Armed Forces is made up of six branches to include:

Department of Defense (DoD)

- U.S. Army (Soldier)
 - U.S. Army National Guard
- U.S. Marine Corps (Marine)
- U.S. Navy (Sailor)
- U.S. Air Force (Airmen)
 - U.S. Air National Guard
- U.S. Space Force (Guardians)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

- U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guardsmen)
 - During times of war or conflict, the president can transfer any or all of their assets to the Navy, which has been done in almost every single conflict where the U.S. was involved.



photo source: [forcejackets.com](https://www.forcejackets.com)



UNDERSTANDING “MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENT”

Students are military-connected if they are enrolled in a college or university and are:

- Active Duty Service Members
- Reservists
- Veterans
- National Guard Members
- Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)
- Spouses, Dependents, Secondary Dependents



“Military-Connected” Glossary

Active Duty: Service members who work full time in the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. They may live on or off a military base, be stationed around the world, and can be deployed at any time.

Reserve: Each branch of the military has a Reserve component.

- The purpose of the Reserve is to provide and maintain trained units and qualified persons to be available for active duty when needed. This may be in times of war, in a national emergency, or as the need occurs based on threats to national security. Their presence can be called upon to serve either stateside or overseas.
- The primary job of the Reserve is to fill the gaps in stateside service positions when the active duty forces ship overseas. Members of the Reserve are required to participate in training drills one weekend a month and two weeks per year.

Veterans: Under Title 38 of the U.S. Code, a veteran is defined as a “person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.”

- The Veterans Affairs (VA) evaluates a person’s veteran status and service record to include:
 - The length of active service
 - Time-period when that service occurred
 - Character or type of service
 - The circumstances and the type of discharge

“Military-Connected” Glossary

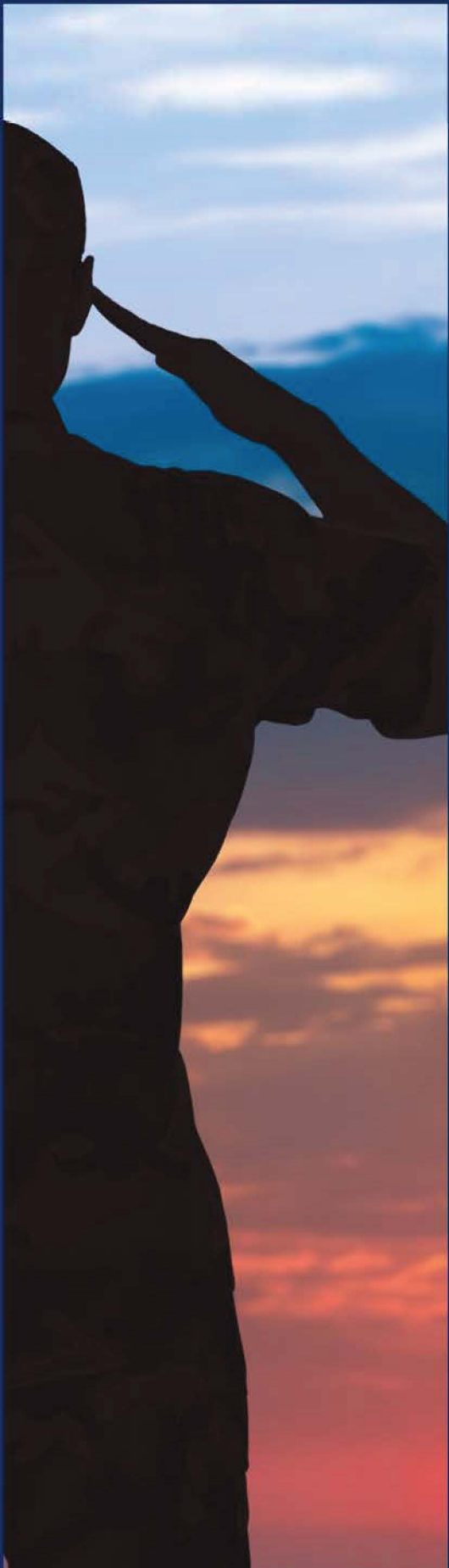


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National Guard: The National Guard consists of the Army National Guard and the Air Force's Air National Guard. While federally funded, the National Guard is organized and controlled by states. However, in times of war, the National Guard can become federalized and deployed.

The National Guard engages in a number of activities. During local emergencies, National Guard units assist communities endangered by storms, floods, fires, and other disasters.

National Guard companies deployed overseas may see combat, but are more often building schools and hospitals, training local peacekeepers, or teaching local farmers more efficient farming techniques and better ways to use their land.

As with the Reserve, the National Guard requires training drills one weekend a month and two weeks per year. National Guard members are given Veteran status if they have served for 30 consecutive days in a war zone.

“Military-Connected” Glossary



Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC): ROTC cadets participate in basic military education and officer training, which varies depending on their branch of service, while receiving higher education just like other students on campus.

- The Army, Navy, and Air Force each have their own ROTC Programs
 - Space Force cadets attend the Air Force ROTC program
 - Marine Corps cadets attend the Navy ROTC program
- Typically, ROTC Students are still considered “civilians” during their first two years of their undergraduate degree, however, prior to moving into their junior year of college they must decide whether they will join the military, i.e. sign their contract.
 - Enrolling in the ROTC Basic Course (the first two years of college) does NOT obligate students to serve unless they have received a scholarship (scholarship = obligation of 4 years of service).

Note: ROTC Students become “military-connected” after they have signed their contract, however, the timeframe and process can vary depending on the individual, military branch, and contract.

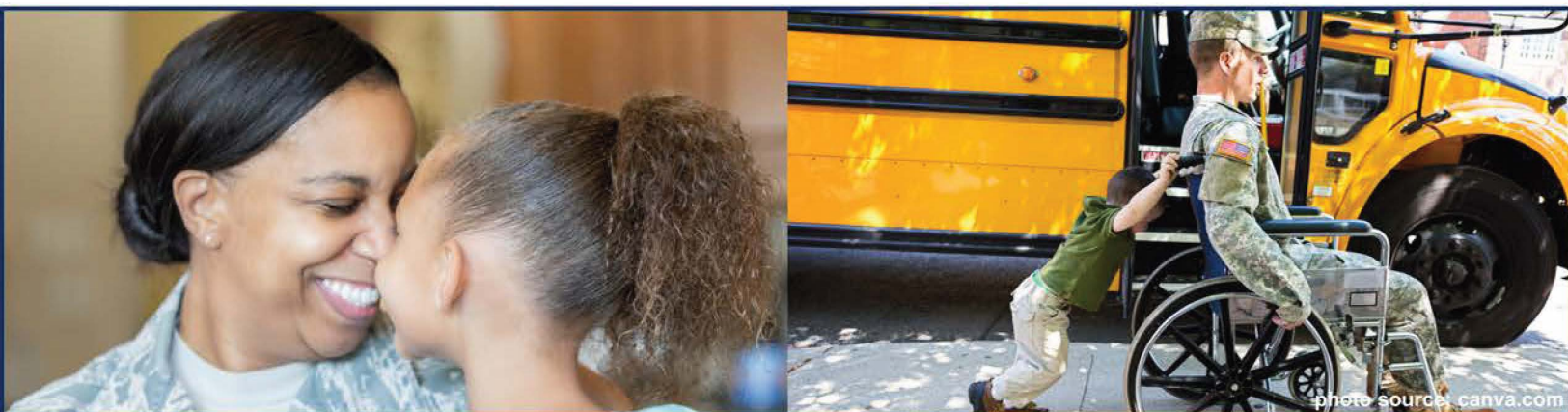
“Military-Connected” Glossary

Dependents: Dependents of military service members can include spouses and adult or child dependents, including surviving dependents of a deceased service member.

- Spouse (the military recognizes same-sex marriages and common-law marriages that take place in states that recognize common-law marriage).
- Unmarried child under the age of 21 (includes adopted children and stepchildren; stepchildren can only be considered dependents if the service member is married to the stepchild’s natural parent).

Secondary Dependents

- Minor child (cousin, foster child, nephew, sister, etc.) under the service member’s legal custody or guardianship.
- Unmarried child who is at least 21, but under 23 who is a full-time student and remains a legal dependent (relies on the service member for more than half of their support).
- Parent, sibling, adult child, and other family member incapable of self-support due to a mental or physical incapacity and relies on the service member for more than half of their support; family member must live with the service member unless placed in institutional care or separated by service.



Military-Connected Student FAQs

Q1: How many military-connected students are there?

A1: According to the most recent data available, the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS) academic year 2015-16, there are approximately 948,800 undergraduate and 189,000 veteran graduate students, 170,790 active duty undergraduate students, and 106,208 reserves and national guard undergraduate students, and 23% of active duty spouses are enrolled in school or training.

Note: These statistics are approximate and do not include all military-connected students, numbers are likely much higher when including ROTC and other dependents.

Q2: How do military-connected students access support services?

A2: Depending on the military-connection and status, students may be able to access campus, community, and/or military resources. Due to the rapid changes in military policies across branches, military and campus advocates may not be aware of all available resources and should have established relationships with military/civilian counterparts, and work with each individual student to refer them to the appropriate support services depending on which avenue/support services are applicable and the student chooses.

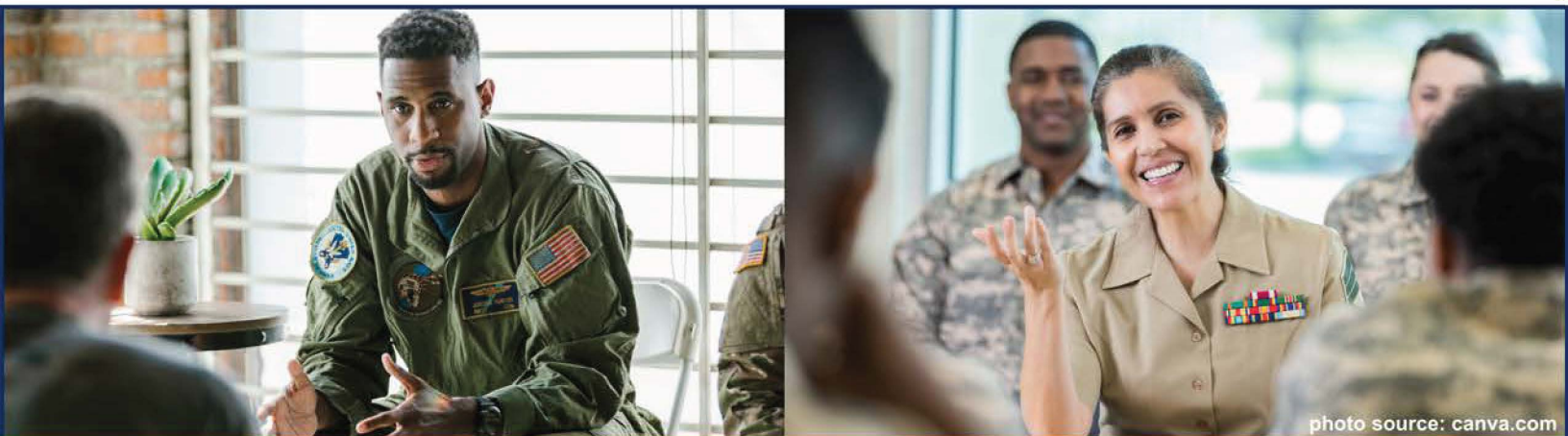


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Military-Connected Student FAQs

Q3: What DVSAS support services are available for military-connected survivors?

A3: The Department of Defense has two programs that military-connected individuals can access for DVSAS support and advocacy.

- **Family Advocacy Program (FAP)**: addresses child abuse/neglect, domestic abuse, and problematic sexual behavior in children and youth. FAP is delivered through the military services, which work in coordination with key military components and civilian agencies.
- **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)**: promotes military readiness by eliminating sexual assault and ensuring excellence in victim advocacy and prevention efforts through the execution of SAPR policy, planning, and oversight across the DoD Community.
 - Army and Army National Guard utilize the **Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program**

Note: Eligibility requirements for FAP and SAPR services include individuals who fall under one of the military-connected groups. For more information, please see [SAPR DoD Directive 6495.02](#) and [FAP DoD Directive 6400.06](#)

Note: Stalking and cyberstalking were added to the [UCMJ](#) in 2019. Military-connected individuals can seek help from SAPR or FAP advocates for assistance with these crimes.

Military-Connected Student FAQs

Q4: What are the two DVSAS military reporting options through the FAP and SAPR/SHARP programs?

A4: There are two reporting options for the FAP and SAPR/SHARP Programs, Restricted and Unrestricted.

- **Restricted Reporting:** Victim may report to a SAPR/SHARP Victim Advocate, FAP Advocate, healthcare personnel, legal, or a chaplain to obtain medical treatment-including emergency care, i.e. SAFE/SANE exam, counseling services, and advocacy services without triggering a law enforcement investigation or command involvement.
 - A restricted report can be changed to unrestricted at any time.
- **Unrestricted Reporting:** Victim may report to a SAPR/SHARP Victim Advocate, FAP Advocate, healthcare personnel, legal, chaplain, the command authorities, or law enforcement to obtain medical treatment-including emergency care, i.e. SAFE/SANE exam, counseling services, advocacy services, initiate a law enforcement investigation, command involvement, and have access to Civilian or Military Protection Orders (CPOs/MPOs), Transitional Compensation, Expedited Transfers, and other command-related safety measures.

Note: Regardless of whether the victim chooses restricted or unrestricted reporting, confidentiality of protected health information will be maintained in accordance with DoDI 6025.18 and DoDM 6025.18

5 Considerations for Supporting Military-Connected Students

#1 TRANSITIONING BETWEEN MILITARY & ACADEMIA

Veteran and Active Duty students often experience difficulty when transitioning from their military service to the academic environment due to a variety of factors.

- **Difficulty Relating to Civilians:** The military experience encompasses unique dynamics, culture, trauma, and challenges. Military-connected students may struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), deployments and separations, actions in a warzone, loss of fellow service members or being a sole survivor, assault, alcohol use, high risk behaviors, divorce, and suicidality. These experiences may hinder relationship building and feelings of relatability to civilians. This population also tends to enter college at an older age, may have a spouse and/or children, and may work full time while attending classes.
- **Changes in Structure:** Military culture is regimented, hierarchal, team-oriented versus individual-oriented, and is guided by selfless and sacrificial doctrine. Transitioning to academia with flexible timeframes and responsibility on the individual can be challenging.

“I have privilege from benefits & tuition assistance, but it makes me unrelatable to other students who were struggling financially. The privilege created barriers...[I] feel othered in these groups once Veteran identity comes out, [but] they don’t see the cost and what it cost me.”

-Military-Connected Student

- **ROTC and Academy Students:** Although students enrolled in military academies or Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) may not have experienced the military environment as an active or reserve service member (they may have as former/current dependents) it does not diminish the unique stressors and experiences.
 - These students have both student and military responsibilities, which includes additional military training, events, assignments, and drills, and can be challenging to manage both military and civilian responsibilities.
- **Spouses and Dependents:** Spouses and dependents who are enrolled in college may not experience deployments or military culture firsthand, but they are expected to be a continued pillar of support for their service members, regardless of their own career or education ambitions.
 - This also means they may be older in comparison to their student counterparts, are moved away from their family, experience continual uprooting (alienation and isolation), have to start/stop their education, have gaps in their work history, and often operate as a single parent or caregiver (or child/dependent of a single parent/caregiver).



photo source: canva.com

#2 MILITARY IDENTITY

Veterans and Active Duty: After leaving the service, these groups face unique challenges and loss to an integral part of their identity.

- Military service is an impactful part of one's life regardless of when or for how long someone served. The impact can remain positive, negative, or even both due to the aforementioned challenges and trauma.

“How do I live with the juxtaposition that this [military] institution that harmed me and yet I am still pro-military?”

“Your identity development changes as you grow as a student—you can't go to your instructor and say, ‘I watched people die everyday.’”

-Military-Connected Students

- Older veterans who serve multiple enlistments or retire after 20 years have only known one world and culture -the military- and removal from that world can be devastating and challenging.
- Due to the unique military dynamics and barriers, military-connected students often express feelings of isolation, loss of kinship, and a desire for community and camaraderie.



#3 MARGINALIZATION, ISOLATION, AND ALIENATION

Marginalization, Isolation, and Alienation is often experienced by military-connected students, as they express perceptions and experiences of being “put in one box” and not recognized for their multiple and diverse identities, and/or alienated from other community groups.

- Only 15% of student Veterans are the traditional age of college students. Most student Veterans are ages 24–40
- 62% of student Veterans are first-generation college students
- 47% of student Veterans have children
- 47.3% of student Veterans are married

“LGBTQ organizations are often anti-military, so as a student I tried to go to the LGBTQ Center, but they were anti-military so I didn’t belong there.”

-Military-Connected Student

There are intricate intersections of multiple identities for military-connected students including: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPoC), disabled service members, LGBTQIA+, DVSA survivors, veterans, deployed v. not deployed service members.

Groups Who May Experience Increased Isolation/Alienation: Male survivors, disabled service members/survivors, English as a second language, deployed service members, LGBTQIA+ and BIPoC service members, and online military-connected students.

Military-Connected Students with Disabilities: Military-connected students with disabilities may also experience increased isolation due to their military identity, disability (visible or not), and prior perceptions of remaining tough and not showing weakness.

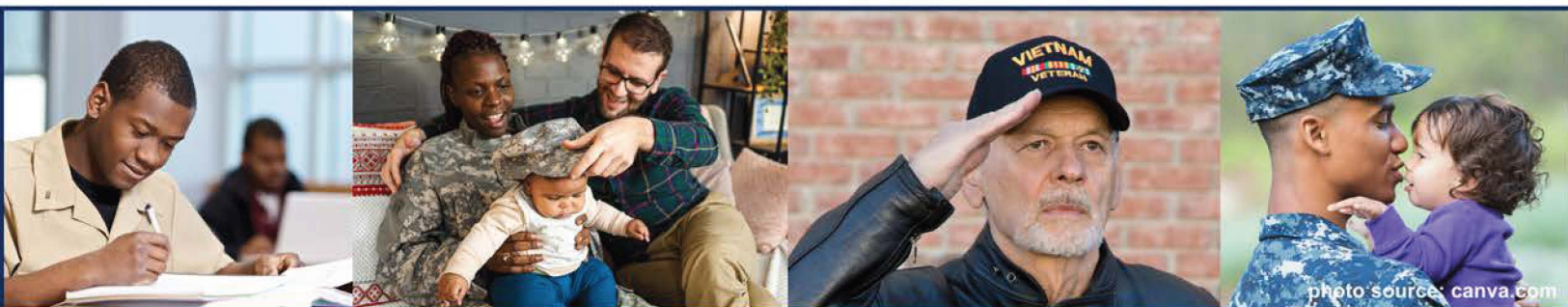
Mental and physical health issues following military service can influence how military-connected students are able to operate and present personally, professionally, and academically. Military-connected students with disabilities may require additional support, time, spaces, or considerations due to visible and/or invisible disabilities.

“I may look fine to you, but there are days I’m not there.”

-Military-Connected Student

Special Considerations:

- Military-Connected Individuals with Service Dogs
- Military-Connected Students with Adaptive Equipment
 - Wheelchairs, prosthetics, hearing aids, etc.
 - Assess physical environment, accessibility, and layouts of common areas, class rooms, screen visibility.
- Mental health can significantly influence cognitive functioning and daily tasks, to include the recollection and learning information, despite effort.



#4 ACCESSING SUPPORT SERVICES

Barriers for Military-Connected Students Seeking Services:

- Mental health and crisis counselors lacked understanding/experience of military-specific trauma and experiences.
- Low staffing, unoccupied offices, or difficulty locating support offices.
- Unwelcoming environments or anti-military climate.
- **Military culture** encourages strength, toughness, and sacrifice, implying that seeking supportive services invokes weakness. Military-connected students may not seek help due to anticipation of non-support, as previously experienced in the military.

“How do I come to terms with the realization that I contributed to people’s deaths every day?”

-Military-Connected Student

• Records

- Military-connected students often express fears of seeking mental health or support services that could influence their current or future military, academic, or career opportunities, and security clearances.
- These legitimate fears may result from prior experiences and perceptions in the military.

DVSAS Support Services

- Often, students mention only hearing about these services during orientation or not at all.

#5 “MILITARY-SUPPORTIVE” VS. “UNSUPPORTIVE” UNIVERSITIES

“Military-Supportive” Colleges/Universities, as described by military-connected students...

- Provide adequate, accessible, and military-specific support and resources.
- Military-connected services are centrally located and accessible, and they provide both on- and off-campus resources.
- Have a greater understanding of military culture, mindset, experiences, unique dynamics, and challenges.

“Military-Unsupportive” Colleges/Universities, as described by military-connected students...

- Staff, faculty, and instructors lack understanding of the military.
- Students only asked about military status during application process.
- Not aware of the different types of military-connectivity.



More military representation is requested within higher education to develop rapport and trust for military-connected students.



photo source: canva.com

What Colleges and Universities Can Do!

Be a Military-Connected Student Supportive Campus:

- Hire or train staff, faculty, and students on military culture, barriers, and military-connectivity
- Develop military-specific and experienced DVSAS and support services
 - Provide adequate, accessible, and military-specific mental health support and resources
 - Train DVSAS staff on unique military barriers AND additional military resources that may be applicable
 - Invite military-connected departments and/or staff members to serve on your Coordinated Community Response Teams (CCRT)
- Create military-friendly spaces
- Host virtual and in-person military-specific events and outreach

Be Intentional with Campus Environment and Climate:

- Increase awareness on campus:
 - Physical displays, posters, signs
 - Speech and conversations of administration and staff
- Provide veteran and military-student offices and programs



photo source: canva.com

An American flag is shown in the top left corner, partially overlapping the white background. The flag is waving and its colors are vibrant. The stars are white on a blue field, and the stripes are red and white.

Key Take-Aways:

- It is the responsibility of university staff, faculty, and military and student offices to create environments that are welcoming and understanding of the unique dynamics, barriers, and challenges that military-connected students and survivors may face prior to and during their college experience.
- Institutions of higher education should understand and assess campus, community, and military-affiliated service provider options to provide seamless and comprehensive services to military-connected DVSA survivors.
- Both institutions of higher learning and military institutions must collaborate, identify gaps in services and outreach, and create successful and supportive referral pathways to ensure military-connected students and survivors receive all entitlements necessary for the successful transition and completion of their degrees and development as students at their institutions.

It is NOVA's intention and hope to inspire colleges and universities to develop policies, procedures, and actions to support marginalized student populations, to include all military-connected students.

Tools and Resources for Colleges/Universities and Military-Connected Students

- **American Council on Education | Academic Research on Military-Connected Students:** <https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/Credit-Transcripts/Research-on-Military-Connected-Students.aspx>
- **DoD Safe Helpline:** <https://www.safehelpline.org/>
- **Laziness Does Not Exist: A Case for Campus Flexibility by Devon Price:** <https://humanparts.medium.com/laziness-does-not-exist-3af27e312d01>
- **Military.com Special Feature | Little Known Education Resources:** <https://www.military.com/education/money-for-school/special-feature-little-knowneducation-resources.html>
- **Military OneSource:** <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>
- **Student Veterans of America (SVA) Resources:** <https://studentveterans.org/chapters/student-resources/>
- **U.S. Department of Education:** <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/supporting-veterans.html>
- **U.S Department of Veterans Affairs | Veteran Student Toolkit:** <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/student-veteran/learn-about-student-veterans.asp>
- **VA Education and Training:** https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/non_va_resources.asp
- **VFW Student Veteran Support:** <https://www.vfw.org/assistance/student-veterans-support>

Scholarly Research Articles

- **From the military to college and beyond: Growing a culturally sensitive program to support veteran success:** <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jclp.22925>
- **Qualitative Study Examining Perceived Stigma and Barriers to Mental Health Care Among Student Veterans:** <https://journal-veterans-studies.org/articles/10.21061/jvs.v8i3.379>
- **Student Service Members/Veterans on Campus: Challenges for Reintegration:** <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5319708/>
- **Supporting Student Veteran Transition to College and Academic Success:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1045159515583813>

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https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/docs/em_activeReserve.asp
- VA.gov “Learn About Student Veterans.”
<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/student-veteran/learn-about-student-veterans.asp>
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References



Centering Student Voices

Domestic, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault &
Stalking (DVSAS):

Toolkit for Supporting Military-Connected Students

For Training and Technical Assistance (TTA):

- To build capacity and strengthen approaches when working with culturally specific and historically marginalized student populations, please contact CampusTA@trynova.org
- For specialized TTA for civilian and community professionals working with military-connected survivors of domestic, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking (DVSAS), please contact:
MilitaryTTA@trynova.org



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