

SEXUAL ASSAULT: We Own It, We'll Solve It, Together

We recognized Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April, including this year's theme: "We own it...We'll solve it...Together." This statement sums up our approach and our responsibility to solving this problem, not just in April, but 365 days a year.

Sexual assault is a crime. It has no place in the Navy, and certainly not anywhere within the Navy Medicine Education and Training Command enterprise. It is a violation of everything for which we stand, and it is an affront to the values we defend.

Many sexual assault victims have come forward and filed a report, and hopefully they are getting the desired care. But as with every unit in our military, I know we probably have victims who have chosen to not report their sexual assault. I want to send a message to every victim reading this today. We are here to care for you and to support you. We are committed to showing you our solidarity as you heal and become a survivor.

Every person in the NMETC enterprise must be committed to eliminating sexual assault from our Navy. Together, our goal is to prevent and respond to this crime in order to enable military readiness, and to reduce — with our ultimate goal being to eliminate — sexual assault from the Navy.

We are fighting this crime from multiple fronts. We aren't just relying on one tool or one program. Combating sexual assault requires strong prevention efforts, sustained progress, innovative approaches and a multi-pronged, multi-disciplinary strategy. The success of every program and initiative is dependent on the daily and continued commitment of every single one of us to foster a climate of mutual dignity and respect, where sexual assault is not tolerated, condoned or ignored.

We must work hard to prevent this crime. But, when it does occur, we need to be there for victims. Those who commit this crime – or think they can get away with it if they do commit it – will be held appropriately accountable.

Solving this is up to us. We own it. As commanders, as leaders, as fellow Sailors, as civilian employees and contractors, it is essential that we all live the core values of honor, courage and commitment, and treat each other with dignity and respect. Our victims and our fellow service members and employees are depending on us. And we all need to recognize this fact: They are watching us. They are paying attention to how we treat each other, how we support our victims, our efforts to hold perpetrators appropriately accountable, and whether we treat one another with dignity and respect.

We take care of our people on the battlefield better than anyone else. Our survival rate in battle in the highest it's ever been. We must extend that same ethos of care to the sexual assault victims among us, and the same level of involvement and execution to preventing and combating sexual assault within our ranks.

I'm asking you to renew your commitment to owning this and solving this, together. We must and we will eliminate sexual assault from within our midst. Your continued support in the coming months and years will help move us closer to a culture free of sexual assault.