



Desk Reference Guide

for

SASH Contacts and Key Responders



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Section 1: Purpose

The maritime industry is committed to fostering a workplace culture of fairness, dignity, and respect—one where sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) are not tolerated. This guide is a practical, easy-to-use reference for individuals who may respond to SASH disclosures or incidents. It is not a policy manual, but a real-time tool designed to support confident, informed, and trauma-responsive action when someone comes forward.

This resource is intended for both SASH Contacts and other Key Responders—including vessel leadership, company supervisors, and maritime personnel—who may be the first to receive a report. While roles and responsibilities differ, the importance of the initial response is universal. Throughout this guide, the term Key Responder acknowledges that anyone, regardless of title, can make a meaningful impact in the moment of response.

Inside, you'll find practical tools, prompts, and checklists built around best practices and trauma-informed principles. While the guide offers essential guidance, it is not a substitute for the 40-Hour SASH Contact Training, nor does it replace MARAD policy, federal law, company Safety Management System (SMS) procedures, or U.S. Coast Guard regulations.

This guide also includes leadership-focused sections to support those responsible for shaping a respectful, accountable culture. Effective prevention and response require more than compliance—they demand continued learning, cultural awareness, and intentional leadership.



Looking for easy-to-use checklists, tip sheets, and forms? Turn to Page 34!

The Terms “Victim” and “Survivor”

Victim is a term used in policies and laws to refer to individuals who are afforded certain rights and protections. It does NOT imply weakness or assign blame; instead, it centers on the injustice and the ongoing battle.

Survivor is a term of empowerment. Although it is more personal, it often emphasizes the crime in the past, centering on the healing process.

NOTE: Companies and organizations may use other terms such as impacted individual, reporter, etc.

**Some people identify as a victim and some as a survivor.
It is most respectful to ask for their preference.**

SASH Program Background

The SASH Contact role and the broader SASH program were born out of a commitment to culture change within the maritime industry, specifically through the EMBARC initiative: Every Mariner Builds A Respectful Culture. EMBARC laid the foundation for creating policies, training standards, and support systems that prioritize the safety, dignity, and well-being of all mariners, including cadets and crew. The vision and core tenets of EMBARC remain central to this guide's purpose and to the mission of every SASH Contact. Understanding and upholding these values is critical to fostering respectful and accountable shipboard environments.

**Every
Mariner
Builds
A
Respectful
Culture**



EMBARC Vision Statement

Every mariner deserves to work in a safe environment where everyone is welcome and supported, and their dignity is fully respected.

EMBARC Core Tenets

- Build and maintain a shipboard culture of safety and respect.
- Establish zero tolerance policies for SASH, harassment, and hostile work environment, zero tolerance for retaliation against anyone who reports assault or harassment, and proportionate responses to policy infractions.
- Eliminate the barriers that victims, witnesses, and bystanders face in reporting SASH incidents.
- Support victims, witnesses, and bystanders who report SASH incidents.
- Promptly address any report of behavior that is inconsistent with EMBARC Standards, using every available resource.
- Review all company and vessel policies and procedures to ensure such policies fully support a work environment in which assault, harassment, and retaliation against those who report assault or harassment are not tolerated.
- Implement SASH best practices and commit to adopting updates when such practices are promulgated by MARAD.
- Incorporate SASH prevention, response, and reporting procedures into the Company and Vessel Safety Management Systems.

Maritime Industry Zero Tolerance Policy

The Fiscal Year National Defense Authorization, enacted in 2022, included requirements that address sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response for vessel owners and operators of all U.S. commercial vessels with crew living on board – not just training ships or vessels hosting cadets.

Zero tolerance is a core tenet of the EMBARC Standards which guide training ships and companies in creating respectful and safe working environments at sea. Zero Tolerance applies to U.S. State Maritime Academies (SMAs), the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), and any commercial vessels with overnight crew accommodations. Importantly, **zero tolerance does not mean uniform punishment for every incident - it means:**

- All reports are taken seriously.
- No level of SASH is accepted or excused.
- Accountability is expected and enforced.

Upholding zero tolerance requires leadership at every level, consistent responses, and a commitment to a workplace where every mariner, cadet, and crew member is treated with dignity and respect.

Recognizing Inappropriate Behaviors and SASH

Sexual harassment and sexual assault can take many forms, and it's not always obvious when a line has been crossed, especially in tight-knit or hierarchical work environments like those aboard ships. Below are examples of behaviors that may indicate SASH is occurring or developing. Recognizing and addressing these early is critical to preventing further harm.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

- Making sexually suggestive comments, jokes, or gestures
- Repeatedly asking someone out after they've said no
- Making comments about someone's body or appearance in a sexual way
- Sharing sexual rumors or gossip
- Displaying sexually explicit materials in shared spaces (e.g., posters, videos, screensavers)
- Sending unwanted texts or messages with sexual content
- Using rank or authority to pressure someone into personal or romantic contact
- Inappropriate touching, hugging, or brushing up against someone

Examples of Sexual Assault

- Unwanted sexual touching or groping
- Forcing or coercing someone into sexual acts
- Any sexual activity with someone who is incapacitated or unable to give consent
- Using force, threats, intimidation, or manipulation to engage in sexual acts
- Non-consensual penetration of any kind



State this early:

"I'm a SASH Contact/ Key Responder and that means I may have to report what you tell me to the Coast Guard or your academy. I'll explain what that looks like."

Trauma-Informed Use in Close Environments

Sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) do not occur by happenstance. Understanding the broader environment, particularly within maritime and shipboard settings, is crucial for ensuring a trauma-informed and effective response.

When responding to a SASH report, consider:

- Who else is nearby?
- Are you speaking in a space where they can talk freely?
- Will your visible actions make things more complicated or safer for them?

Unique Challenges in Maritime Settings

- **Rigid Hierarchical Structures:** Chain of command and rank-based relationships can deter reporting, especially when the person causing harm holds formal or informal authority over the victim. The same hierarchy that maintains order could also silence disclosures when misused.
- **Limited Familiarity with Trauma-Informed Approaches:** Most shipboard personnel are not trained to recognize or respond to trauma, which can impact how victims disclose and seek help. Without trauma-informed practices, responses may unintentionally cause further harm or discourage reporting.
- **Close Quarters and Lack of Privacy:** On a vessel, physical proximity is unavoidable. Individuals live and work side by side, which can reduce a victim's sense of control, autonomy, and safety. Providing support in a public area may unintentionally reveal the victim's experience to others, increasing the risk of stigma or retaliation.
- **Limited Access to Support:** Victims may be far from shore-based services, rape crisis centers, mental health care, a private place to process their emotions, or a confidential space to have a meeting or a call.

Section 2: Response

Do This Immediately

- **Listen.** Give your full attention. Stay calm.
- **Affirm.** "Thank you for telling me. You did the right thing by coming forward."
- **Check for Safety.** Ask if there are any emergency safety concerns.
- **Protect Privacy.** Speak somewhere private if possible.
- **Report Up.** Know your chain of command. If you are a Key Responder, notify your designated SASH Contact, HR, or supervisor immediately.



Page 9 is a one-page response guide for SASH Contacts & Key Responders

Do Not

- **Investigate.** Do not ask probing questions or try to verify facts.
- **Make promises.** Avoid saying things like "I won't tell anyone."
- **Minimize or express doubt.** Avoid saying things like "Are you sure?" or "That doesn't sound like them."

Next Steps

- Provide a copy of the Reporting Options Quick Reference Guide on Page 35 to the victim.
- Inform the victim about the next steps, as outlined by company policy.

Principles and Values of a Trauma-Informed Response

Practicing the key principles and values of a Trauma-Informed approach in your daily work and communication with others will help you apply the necessary skills when responding to a SASH report.

Key Principles

- **Safety:** Ensuring physical and emotional safety by fostering a supportive, healthy environment that is free from retaliation and further threats.
- **Trustworthiness:** Establishing and maintaining trustworthiness in SASH contacts and maritime leadership through transparency, reliability, and consistency.
- **Choice:** Respecting the choices and preferences of victims to ensure autonomy.
- **Collaboration:** Working collaboratively with other trauma-informed individuals and agencies for victims to create a system of responsive, effective, and quality support.
- **Empowerment:** Supporting the victim in having control of their healing process.

Values

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Act without judgment | • Listen with empathy and respect |
| • Be informed | • Maintain professional boundaries |
| • Act from the standpoint of belief | • See the whole person |

Step-by-Step Checklist: Receive, Affirm, Protect

When someone discloses an incident of SASH, your response matters. Victims often remember how they were treated after coming forward, and that response can either support their healing or reinforce harm. This guide offers a step-by-step response rooted in trauma-informed care.

Safety planning should begin immediately. Gently explore the victim's emotional, physical, and environmental safety without pushing them to share more than they are ready to.

1. Receive the Disclosure



- **Remain calm and present.** Focus on the person, not the report.
- **Offer privacy.** If possible, move to a quiet, private location.
- **Listen without judgment.** Avoid interrupting or asking for details you don't need to know.
- **Affirm the Victim.** "I'm really sorry this happened, and I appreciate you trusting me."
- **Use appropriate body language.** Maintain distance and don't touch them unless invited to.



2. Clarify Your Role

- **Explain what you can and cannot do.** Be transparent about your reporting obligations.
- **Let them know what to expect next.** Walk them through the general process.

3. Assess for Safety



Safety planning should be woven into your conversation. You don't have to ask every question — listen for what is already being shared. Here are some gentle safety-check prompts you can ask:

- "Are you feeling safe where you are sleeping or working?"
- "Are you concerned about encountering the other person again?"
- "Are there locations onboard where you do or do not feel safe?"
- "As we move forward with this report, is there anything about your current situation that makes you feel uneasy?"
- "Is there anyone else you trust to be nearby or check in?"



4. Protect the Victim's Dignity

- **Offer choices.** Let them decide how and when to proceed, when possible.
- **Respect their pace.** Avoid rushing them in their disclosure, as they may only want to or be able to share limited information.
- **Be discreet.** Keep documentation and conversations private and secure.



5. Initiate the Next Steps

- **Follow your protocol.** Complete intake documentation using only necessary, factual information following required timelines.
- **Notify the required personnel.** Inform the person reporting an incident about the next steps outlined in company policy, including the notifications that must be made.
- **Offer continued support.** Provide resources and let the victim know how they can contact you again if needed.

SASH Contacts

SASH Contacts are trained personnel assigned to support individuals who experience sexual assault or sexual harassment (SASH) during maritime training, employment, or travel. Their role is critical—not only for supporting victims but also for ensuring that legal obligations and organizational expectations are met with professionalism and care.

Responsibilities of a SASH Contact:

- Provide a trauma-informed space for reporting.
- Treat victims with respect and share knowledge.
- Ensure the implementation of EMBARC and company SASH policies and procedures.
- Follow MARAD and company policy and regulations to help reduce SASH in the maritime industry.

A SASH Contact is a:

- Trusted Supporter
- Information/Resource Sharer
- Reporting Process Navigator

A SASH Contact is NOT:

- An investigator
- A confidential source
- Decision maker of guilt or innocence

Note

It is not recommended that a designated SASH Contact be assigned as to conduct an investigation. However, in the case they are, the individual is then acting as an investigator, NOT a SASH Contact.

Mandatory Reporting

SASH Contacts, responders, and leadership cannot promise confidentiality. Reports may be required to be submitted to:

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), State Maritime Academies (SMAs),
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), or the company or employer

When a USMMA or SMA Cadet is Onboard

There are additional responsibilities of the SASH Contact and Key Responders when a USMMA or SMA Cadet arrives on board. Per the EMBARC Standards, the designated SASH Contacts must:

- Initiate contact with cadets: Prior to embarkation, or within 48 hours of their arrival on board.
- Follow up 7 days after embarkation to check in.
- Ensure cadets know who the SASH Contacts are, how to contact them, and understand the SASH Contact's role and reporting obligations.
- If the cadet is aboard a vessel for more than 30 days, the SASH Contact shall initiate contact, via email, with the cadet at least every 14 days.
- **The SASH Contact or Key Responder must notify the appropriate academy within 24 hours of learning about a SASH allegation involving a cadet and then provide a completed report. Notification must occur even if the cadet on board was not directly involved. Reports made to the Academy must not include the identity or privacy information of any alleged perpetrators who are not cadets of that Academy.**



Key Responders

The following section outlines minimum recommended actions for individuals in key roles who may receive, witness, or become aware of SASH on board vessels or within maritime operations. Although these roles are not designated SASH Contacts, each plays a critical part in preventing harm and ensuring an appropriate response. Depending on the individuals involved, there will be different investigation paths. Details on investigations can be found on pages 13 and 14.

These recommended actions are informed by trauma-informed response principles, the EMBARC Standards Program, relevant U.S. Coast Guard reporting requirements, and nationally recognized victim advocacy best practices. **All key responders must ensure they share only privacy-protected details with those who truly have an official need to know.**

Vessel Leadership

Role: Act immediately, follow protocols, and notify the appropriate parties promptly.

Action Steps:

- Ensure the victim is safe and minimize contact, to the extent feasible, with the alleged offender.
- Notify the designated SASH Contact and your company's point of contact.
- Do not conduct your own investigation unless directed by an authority or company IAW company procedures.
- Log any concerns IAW SMS while maintaining privacy.

Company Operations/Management

Role: Coordinate vessel support, ensure compliance and communication with external reporting obligations.

Action Steps:

- Ensure vessel leadership has initiated immediate safety measures.
- Support the vessel in removing the alleged offender from the victim's workspace, if needed.
- Monitor case coordination and ensure reporting deadlines are met.
- Review lessons learned and update SMS protocols as necessary.

Company Human Resources (HR)

Role: Ensure reports are appropriately escalated, investigations follow trauma-informed practices, and all documentation complies with Coast Guard, company, and academy requirements.

Action Steps:

- Receive initial report details from the SASH Contact or vessel leadership.
- Initiate required company reporting protocols and internal documentation.
- Confirm that CGIS and the appropriate agencies have been notified, as required.
- Track response deadlines, such as the 10-day administrative report requirement.
- Coordinate referrals or accommodations (e.g., change of watch, leave) as needed.

Company Executive Leadership

Role: Demonstrate commitment to zero tolerance, empower personnel, and ensure proper resource allocation and oversight.

Action Steps:

- Reinforce a zero-tolerance workplace and support prompt action taken by staff.
- Ensure company compliance with all Coast Guard and academy requirements.
- Protect against retaliation and monitor the culture on board and ashore.
- Consider an external review or audit if patterns emerge or handling was delayed.
- Publicly support training, prevention, and victim-centered policies.

Section 3: Reporting

Reporting Process, Flow, and Agencies

A victim may report anonymously or through their relevant agencies, which could result in a criminal or administrative investigation.

Defining a SASH Report

A report is a statement by a complainant to the SASH Contact, someone responding to a SASH incident, or other designated personnel that they experienced behavior believed to be SASH-related.

This may include nonconsensual and/or unwanted sexual contact, including any sexual contact that occurs without explicit consent or that is experienced as unwanted.

Report vs Investigation: The terms “report” and “investigation” refer to different phases. A report is the act of disclosing an incident or concern. An investigation may follow if the report meets relevant policy or legal thresholds. Not all reports lead to investigations.

Any complaint or incident of harassment, sexual harassment, or sexual assault in violation of employer policy or law aboard U.S.-flagged vessels must be reported immediately by the fastest telecommunications channel available (e.g., CGIS Tips app, email, etc).

Refer to page 17 for “Compiling and Documenting a Report”

Anonymous Reporting

Because SASH Contacts, vessel leadership, and company officials are required to report any incident if they become aware of it, anonymous reporting is generally available only if the incident has not already been reported to any of those individuals.

- A victim may submit an anonymous report to the U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Services (CGIS)
- A limited investigative response may follow
- To report anonymously, use the CGIS Tips Line at 833-200-4387 or <https://www.p3tips.com/878>



If you're unsure where to start, contact the designated SASH Contact, your company's SASH lead, or the vessel officer in charge.

Reporting Options Quick Reference Guide

This tool helps mariners, cadets, and personnel understand the different types of reporting options available when a SASH (Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment) incident occurs. Use this sheet to identify what kind of report you are making, who to notify, what happens next, and how to reach them. *Contact info may be customized by each company or vessel.*

Type of Report	Who You Report To	What Happens Next	Contact Info
Anonymous Tip	U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS)	May trigger internal inquiry if enough detail is provided; identity not required.	CGIS Tips Line: 833-200-4387 www.uscg.mil/ta/cgis
Criminal Report	Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS) or Local Law Enforcement	May initiate a criminal investigation. Survivor may be contacted for follow-up.	CGIS: 202-372-2100 cgis@uscg.mil Local Law Enforcement Foreign Port: 1-888-407-4747 (from U.S. or Canada) +1-202-501-4444 (from overseas) U.S. Embassy Locator: www.usembassy.gov
Administrative Report	SASH Contact, Supervisor, Academy Staff	Triggers internal investigation per company or academy policy. May require Coast Guard notification.	Company-Specific USMMA SAPR Office sapr@usmma.edu (518) 462-3207 State Maritime Academy https://www.maritime.dot.gov/maritime-workforce/maritime-education
EEOC Complaint	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)	Investigates federal employment law violations; may result in legal remedy.	EEOC: 800-669-4000 eoc.gov

Special Reporting Options for USMMA Cadets

Additional Notes

Restricted Report	Unrestricted Report
Does not trigger an official investigation	Triggers official administrative and/or criminal investigation
Shared only with SAPRO, healthcare providers, and designated confidential resources	Shared with SAPRO and reported to CGIS, Company, and/or Academy leadership
Victim receives support services without initiating an investigation	Victim receives support services and an investigation proceeds
Maintains privacy and limited disclosure	Prioritizes accountability and safety for the community

Note: Only specific individuals (e.g., USMMA SAPRO staff or medical providers) can receive a Restricted Report. Reporting to a

- Multiple reports may be triggered by one disclosure (e.g., criminal + administrative).
- SASH Contacts are mandatory reporters and cannot promise confidentiality.
- This sheet should be updated regularly and kept readily accessible onboard.



Check out the Reporting Options Quick Reference Guide on Page 35

Criminal Report

Criminal reporting paths are based on federal, state, or military criminal law and are investigated by law enforcement. These investigations seek to determine whether a crime has occurred and, if so, pursue legal accountability through the criminal justice system. This includes sexual assault and certain forms of sexual harassment that meet criminal thresholds. Convictions arising from these investigations can result in criminal penalties, including incarceration, fines, probation, or other court-imposed sanctions.

Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS)

CGIS may coordinate with the company regarding next steps. Companies should follow their Safety Management System (SMS), legal counsel's guidance, and the Coast Guard's direction regarding internal investigations.

A follow-up written report summarizing actions taken must be submitted within 10 days, consistent with USCG MSIB 01-23 and 46 U.S.C. § 10104.

When necessary, CGIS may deploy investigators or coordinate the removal of personnel.

Investigative timelines may depend on the vessel's location, the severity of the allegations, and jurisdictional considerations.

How to Report to CGIS

National Command Center at 202-372-2100

Email: cgistips@uscg.mil

Complete an online form (can be anonymous) at www.p3tips.com/878

CGIS mobile app from your smartphone (can be anonymous)



U.S. Local Law Enforcement Agency (LEA)

- Applies to SASH incidents that occur in U.S. ports or waters and fall under the jurisdiction of the state or local authorities where the ship is located.
- Local LEAs are responsible for criminal investigations, including interviewing victims and witnesses, gathering physical evidence, and making arrests.
- Arrest decisions are governed by applicable constitutional and statutory standards, including the requirement that law enforcement establish probable cause under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- If the incident occurs at sea but is reported once in port, the LEA in the receiving jurisdiction may coordinate with federal authorities (e.g., Coast Guard or FBI), depending on the location and situation.

Local law enforcement involvement varies by state, and SASH Contacts should be aware of the jurisdictional laws in each port.

Foreign Port

- US Embassies assist US citizens who experience a crime while traveling, working, or residing abroad.
- Available 24/7 for emergency assistance
- 1-888-407-4747 (from U.S. or Canada)
- +1-202-501-4444 (from overseas)
- U.S. Embassy Locator www.usembassy.gov

Administrative Report

Administrative processes are used by organizations, institutions, or regulatory bodies to address misconduct that may not constitute a criminal offense or occur in contexts where internal policy violations are being assessed. While the term "administrative" may sound procedural, these investigations address behaviors such as sexual assault or sexual harassment and other violations that can have lasting harm and require meaningful intervention and accountability. These reporting paths are:

- Based on company policies, academy policies, or federal regulations.
- Can result in verbal or written warning followed by termination.
- Administrative investigations often apply a preponderance-of-the-evidence standard ("more likely than not"), though specific standards may vary depending on company policy, academy procedures, or applicable law.

Company Reporting & Disciplinary Process

- Every company has its own reporting process – refer to the Safety Management System (SMS) for further information on a specific company's policy.
- Multiple persons can be designated to receive a report, including but not limited to: Vessel Supervisor, Senior Officer, Designated Person Ashore, Port Captain, Port Engineer, Personnel Department, or Human Resources
- Once a report is made to the company, the company is **required** to report it to the Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS).
- If a USMMA or SMA cadet is onboard, the company is also **required** to report the incident to the relevant academy, regardless of whether the incident involved a cadet.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

- Used to report an employment discrimination complaint.
- Speak to an EEOC staff member to confirm eligibility.
- If a formal Charge of Discrimination is filed and accepted, the EEOC is required under federal law to serve notice of the charge to the employer within 10 days (29 CFR § 1601.14; 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(b)).
- The EEOC may offer voluntary mediation through its Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program. If both parties agree, mediation may take place before a full investigation. If mediation is declined or does not result in a resolution, the investigation proceeds. The respondent will be asked to file a response to the charge.
- On average, an investigation takes 10 months to resolve, but it could be longer. The investigation can also provide the foundation for filing a civil suit for additional damages.

To Report to EEOC: Find the EEOC office closest to you by calling 1-800-669-4000 or file the report online at www.publicportal.eeoc.gov.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Office (SAPRO)

USMMA Cadets may file a restricted or unrestricted report of sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or retaliation, regardless of the identity of the alleged offender. In the case of an unrestricted report, investigative and adjudication processes may vary depending on the alleged offender's status and jurisdiction.

Restricted Report

May only be made to the following individuals:

- Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC)
- Victim Advocate (VA), Volunteer VA, or Prevention Educator
- Academy Health Care Provider (HCP)
- Other individuals who have been trained and/or credentialed and are designated annually in a Superintendent Notice

Important Notes:

- This report does result in an investigation
- The victim can receive medical, mental health, and other services without disclosing to law enforcement
- Details shared in a restricted report are kept confidential and are not disclosed beyond designated personnel, except in limited circumstances required by law or policy (such as imminent safety concerns, court order, or other mandatory reporting obligations) The report can be changed to an unrestricted report later

Unrestricted Report

Can be made to:

- USMMA: SARC, VA, Faculty, or Chain of Command
- Company Officials: SASH Contact, Vessel Master, or Officers
- Law Enforcement Agency (LEA): Local LEA, Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS), or Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Important Notes:

- An unrestricted report results in command notification and may initiate an investigation, depending on jurisdiction and the identity of the accused.
- The victim can receive medical, mental health, and other services
- The victim may be asked to be interviewed
- This report **cannot** switch to a restricted report later

How to Contact the USMMA SAPRO

sapro@usmma.edu (516) 462-3207

<https://www.usmma.edu/academy-life/sexual-assault-prevention/sexual-assault-prevention-and-response-program>

State Maritime Academy (SMA)

- Title IX requires the SMA to address sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and stalking that occur within its educational programs or activities. SMA cadets can seek supportive measures and file an informal or formal complaint with their Title IX Coordinator.
- While on the ship, accommodations can be requested in coordination with the Title IX Coordinator and Vessel Leadership.
- Once returned to the SMA, safety, academic, and housing accommodations can be requested.
- More info: <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/title-ix-and-sex-discrimination>

Suspension & Revocation (S&R) Hearings

If an administrative investigation confirms misconduct related to sexual assault or sexual harassment, the Coast Guard Investigating Officer (IO) may file a formal complaint to initiate Suspension and Revocation (S&R) proceedings against the alleged offender's Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC).

Key elements of an S&R hearing include:

- **A parallel criminal case is not required**
- Respondent (mariner) must hold a USCG Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC)
- The complaint lists the alleged violations, the IO's findings of fact, and the IO's proposed sanctions.
- The defendant (mariner) may be offered a settlement agreement for sexual assault or harassment offenses.
- If no settlement agreement is offered or the accused mariner contests the allegations, an S&R administrative hearing will be held with an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ), a USCG attorney, the IO, and the mariner in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).
- At the conclusion of the hearing, parties may agree to submit written briefs. If written briefs are waived, the ALJ can decide at the end of the hearing.
- **Not everyone aboard a vessel may hold an MMC—for example, supernumeraries, military personnel, contractors, or riding gangs. However, reporting incidents to CGIS ensures that a criminal or civil investigation can be conducted. This also ensures that the U.S. Coast Guard's Suspension and Revocation office has a record of the complaint, which may be used to prevent the issuance of an MMC if the offender seeks one in the future.**

Note

The Coast Guard Investigating Officer (IO) involved in Suspension & Revocation (S&R) hearings is not the same as the Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS). These processes may occur in parallel but serve different purposes and adhere to different legal standards.

- **CGIS** handles criminal investigations into sexual assault, harassment, or other serious violations.
- The **IO** manages the administrative complaint process and represents the Coast Guard in S&R hearings related to mariner credentialing.



Compiling and Documenting a Report

A report is a written or verbal statement made by someone who has experienced or witnessed a prohibited behavior. It is intended to initiate either an administrative or criminal process by the appropriate organization. Reports are not investigations, they are the starting point for further action.



Check out the Sample SASH Report Intake Form on Page 36.



Key Elements to Document

Per USCG MSIB 01/23 and 46 U.S. Code § 10104(a), all complaints of sexual assault and sexual harassment aboard U.S.-flagged vessels **must be reported immediately to the USCG** using the fastest communications channel available (e.g., CGIS Tips app, email, etc). SASH reports generally include the following information to the best of the knowledge of the person making the report:

- **Name, official position or role in relation to the vessel, and contact information of such individual**
- **Name and official number of the documented vessel**
- **Time and date of the incident**
- **Geographic position or location of the vessel when the incident occurred (e.g., port city, geographic position if at sea)**
- **Brief description of the alleged sexual harassment or sexual assault being reported**
- **Names and roles of involved parties (if known)**



When compiling a report, document only the facts as shared by the individual. Do not interpret, paraphrase, or editorialize.

Use language such as "Person stated..."

A follow-up report, submitted within 10 days, must include a summary of actions taken (investigation, safety measures) and any known disciplinary outcomes.

Documentation Best Practices

While documentation should be timely, it should never compromise the victim's emotional safety. Focus on listening, not investigating.

- **Avoid opinions, assumptions, or speculation.** Stick to what was said or observed.
- **Pause if the person appears to be distressed.** Let them know they can take a break.
- **Clearly explain:** "I'm writing this down so I can fulfill my responsibilities and support you."
- **Don't document anything you didn't hear or see directly.**
- Always remind the person that, as a SASH Contact/Key Responder/vessel officer/company official, **you are required to share this information** with the company, USCG, and the cognizant academy of any cadet(s) on board.

Following the Initial Disclosure

Coming forward after an experience of SASH can be extremely difficult before, during, and after the disclosure. SASH Contacts and key personnel must prioritize victim safety planning and support.

Safety Planning Considerations

A **safety plan** is a personalized plan that includes practical information about staying safe, physically and emotionally.



Check out the SASH Victim Safety Planning Worksheet in the Maritime Industry on Page 39.

Safety is not limited to physical danger and includes psychological, emotional, and environmental factors which impact the victim's well-being. When assessing for risk and safety following a disclosure of sexual assault or sexual harassment, anyone responding to an incident of SASH should take a calm, nonjudgmental, and observational approach.

Safety Planning Best Practices

- **Listen to the victim:** It is important to actively listen to their concerns and fears.
- **Assess the level of danger:** Assess the level of danger the victim faces by looking at the severity and frequency of the abuse, the presence of weapons, and the alleged offender's history of violence.
- **Identify safe places:** Identify safe places within the vessel where the victim can go in case of an emergency.
- **Create a support network:** Create a support network for the victim that includes friends, family, and community resources.
- **Document abuse:** Encourage the victim to document any incidents of abuse, including dates, times, and details of what happened.
- **Keep the Individual Informed:** Help them fully understand the process and what they can expect to happen so they are not caught by surprise and can share any safety concerns they have with you connected to the reporting process.

The goal is not to make decisions for the victim, but to ensure they are informed and able to plan effectively and create conditions in which they **feel secure, respected, and in control of the next steps.**

Because maritime vessels are confined, safety accommodations must be practical and discreet. Examples of onboard safety accommodations include:

- Temporary reassignment of living quarters or duties (with consent)
- Adjusted watch schedules to avoid contact with the accused
- Increased supervision or “buddy check-ins” by trusted peers
- Identification of “safe spaces” (e.g., bridge, galley, infirmary)
- Use of shipboard comms (radio or text) for discreet check-ins
- Removal from the ship at the next port, if desired, and if possible, have a family member or trusted friend meet them

Buddy Systems

SASH Contacts and leadership can encourage the use of voluntary buddy systems.

- The victim should establish boundaries, but the SASH Contact can assist in this with the victim’s consent
- The buddy does not need to know full details, just how to support
- Rotate responsibilities if the buddy feels overwhelmed
- The victim or buddy should not be reprimanded or face retaliation for utilizing the buddy system as intended

Supporting Victim Autonomy

A trauma-informed response requires offering choices and minimizing pressure. The person responding to an incident of SASH, including SASH Contacts, may not agree with the direction or choices a victim makes in their reporting or recovery. However, as long as it is safe, that is the victim’s choice. Autonomy can be a form of safety. Control over decisions helps rebuild power after trauma. Ways to support autonomy include:

- Ask: “Would it be okay if I checked in with you later today?”
- Avoid “You need to...” — instead, say “One option could be...”
- Offer multiple paths for action, including doing nothing right now
- Always explain what you’re doing and why before taking any step



Never relocate the victim in a way that appears punitive or removes them from leadership opportunities.

Long-Term Support

Supporting Someone Post-Disclosure

After someone discloses a SASH incident, their healing process doesn't stop with your first conversation. You may continue to be someone they rely on. While you are not expected to be a counselor, your attitude and actions can significantly influence their recovery and trust in the reporting process.

Best Practices in Supporting a Victim Post-Disclosure

Model healthy behavior. Responding with respect, calmness, and consistency helps support victims and deters harm.

Recognize trauma responses. Victims may lash out or become withdrawn. Don't take it personally. Respect their process and give space when needed.

Protect their privacy. Refrain from discussing the report or incident with anyone who does not need to know, even if it is only in a casual manner.

Validate their feelings. Remind them that what they experienced was not their fault and that any emotions (shock, anger, sadness, etc) are normal.

Avoid repeated questioning. Do your best not to ask the victim to retell their experience.

Be consistent. If you promised to follow up or check in, do so. Victims notice when people forget or minimize their experiences.

Maintain appropriate boundaries. Continue to offer respect, not friendship. Your role involves providing professional support and connecting individuals to resources.

Providing Referrals Onshore and Onboard

SASH Contacts should have a working knowledge of the resources available onboard and ashore, as well as how to connect victims with support.

Know your limits. You are not expected to diagnose or counsel the victim, only connect them with professionals who can.

Keep referral resources handy. Maintain a current, easily accessible list of common resources and helping agencies.

Follow up—but don't pressure. You may gently check in about referrals, but never force or repeatedly ask about them.

Ask before referring. Empower the victim by asking, "Would you like help connecting with someone ashore who can support you with [counseling, medical, etc.]?"

Offer multiple options. When possible, give choices on where to receive support, i.e. third-party, anonymous, academy, employer, etc.

Respect cultural and accessibility needs. Consider language access, disability, and religious or cultural preferences when providing referrals.

Providing Referrals Onshore and Onboard

- Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) programs and medical services
- Mental health counselors and trauma therapists
- Victim compensation programs through state or federal agencies
- Advocacy organizations (e.g. state coalitions, maritime-specific services)
- Confidential hotlines (e.g., National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673)

Communicating with Respect and Professionalism

Communication Best Practices

Trained SASH Contacts, leadership, and responders can always be reminded of helpful phrases and responses to SASH victims.

The best thing anyone can do is LISTEN.

Confidentiality Considerations

There is no official "restricted reporting" option in the maritime industry for reporting SASH, except for the reporting options for Cadets. There are anonymous hotlines and online chat resources that offer confidential reporting options without intervention available to anyone. However, regardless of who the victim is, it is crucial to respect their privacy and not disclose the details or report to those who do not need to know.



Below are some communication best practices to ensure you are listening with a trauma-informed approach:

- Offer to speak somewhere private; the individual may not want to be alone with you
- Listen without interruption and avoid the urge to fill the silence
- Eliminate any distractions like cell phones, computers, work projects, etc
- Maintain an open posture without touching
- Maintain eye contact
- Respond with appropriate body language and facial expressions
- Validate their emotions, reactions, or feelings
- Paraphrase and summarize what the victim is sharing
- Do not expect instant decisions
- Do not investigate (limit questions)

Do NOT Say

Judgmental/hurtful statements

"Why didn't you..."
 "You should have..."
 "Are you sure?"
 "It could have been worse"
 "You are lucky that..."
 "I understand how you feel."
 "You'll get over it"
 "Be strong for..."
 "Calm down"

Things to Say

Choose your words carefully

"Thank you for telling me."
 "I am sorry this happened to you."
 "This was not your fault."
 "I'm noticing..."
 "You're not alone."
 "I'm here to help."
 "You are safe now."
 "You did what you had to."
 "I BELIEVE YOU."

Closing the Conversation

It is essential to conclude the conversation appropriately. Offer to directly connect them with contacts at helping agencies by sending emails or conducting a 3-way call with specific contacts at agencies or resource centers. This warm hand-off approach can reaffirm the victim's trust and confidence in you. Considering the limitations in communication during maritime operations, be prepared to connect the victim with resources both afloat and ashore. Offer to check on them periodically and explain what they can expect from you going forward.

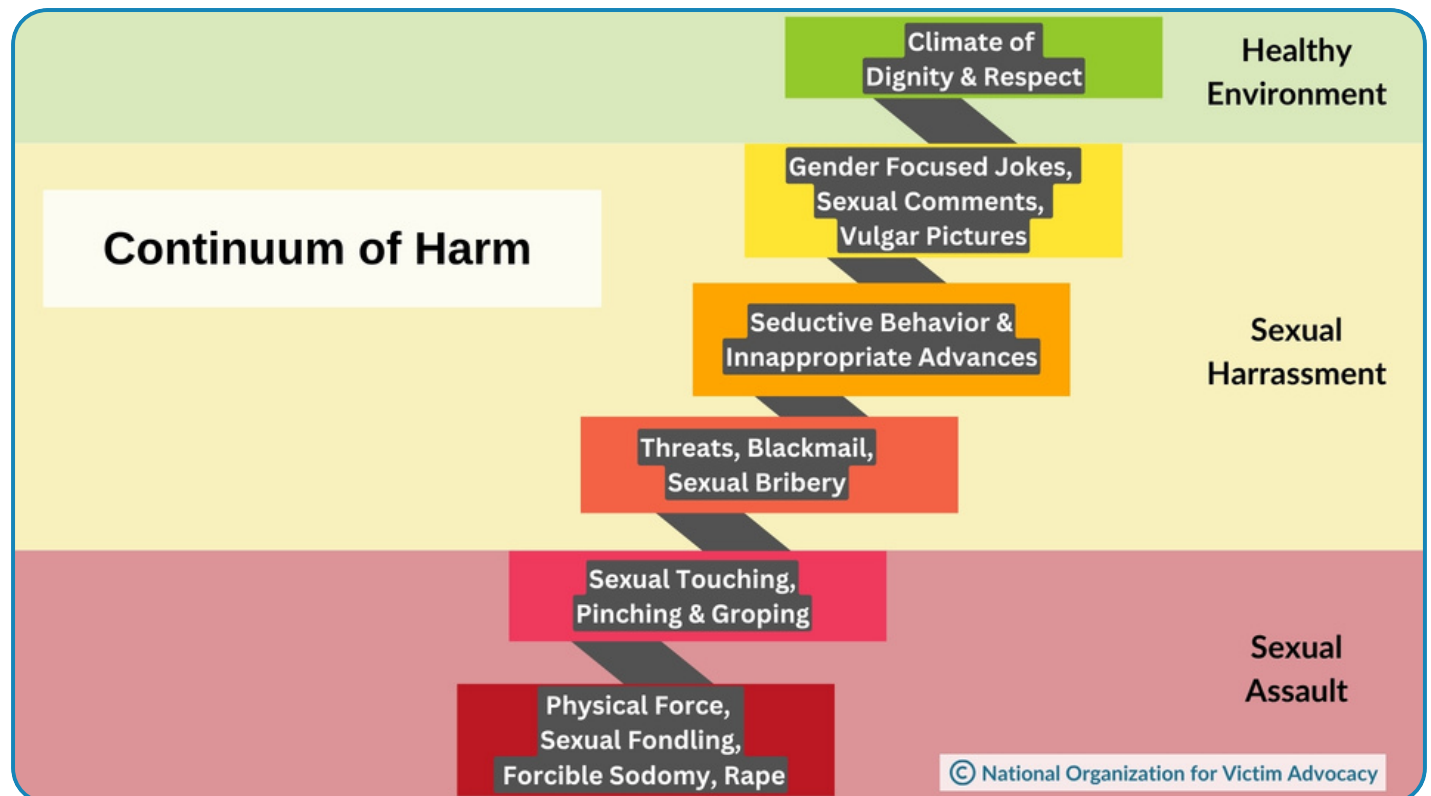
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Section 4: Prevention & Culture Change

The Continuum of Harm

The image below illustrates the spectrum of behavior that contributes to either a respectful and safe shipboard climate or one that enables harm.

This “continuum” demonstrates that SASH doesn't start with assault—it begins with unchecked disrespect, including things like sexist jokes or offhand comments. When leadership and crew fail to address these behaviors, it opens the door for more severe violations to occur.



SASH is about disrespect, power imbalances, and harm. If a behavior feels off, isolating, or causes someone to avoid certain spaces or people, it should be addressed.



It's more important to take action than to debate whether a behavior meets a specific legal threshold. Trying to categorize whether something is “harassment” or “assault” should never delay a supportive response or intervention.

Cultural and Environmental Considerations

The Culture We Normalize Becomes the Culture We Live In

The maritime industry, like every industry, fosters a culture based on what behaviors are accepted, normalized, and promoted.

If positive, healthy, and respectful behaviors are accepted and promoted, they will become the norm. If toxic behaviors like sexist jokes, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are prevalent with no accountability, that will become the norm.

This is why **every action—big or small—matters**. Responding appropriately to inappropriate comments, calling out harmful behavior, and supporting victims sends a message about what will and won't be tolerated.

Power-Based Dynamics

In maritime workplaces, power shows up in many forms, not just rank. Power dynamics can influence how people respond to a report, who feels safe speaking up, and whose voices are more likely to be believed.

Types of power that affect SASH response include:

Coercive Power: Fear of consequences or punishment	Formal Power: Assigned by rank or job title	Informational Power: Control of knowledge or procedure	Connection Power: Influence based on relationships	Expert Power: Influence from perceived knowledge	Referent Power: Popularity or likability
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Even well-meaning individuals may unconsciously reinforce power imbalances that silence victims or protect alleged offenders. When leaders fail to model appropriate responses—or avoid addressing SASH concerns altogether—they contribute to a culture of silence.

Culture Change is Possible

Culture isn't fixed—it's shaped by the daily behaviors, attitudes, and responses of everyone on board. You don't need to be a supervisor or SASH Contact to influence culture. Every individual has the power to help create a safer, more respectful environment.

It Starts When We:

- Acknowledge that SASH exists and is preventable
- Speak up when we see disrespect or harm
- Support victims without judgment
- Create space for others to feel seen, heard, and safe

Section 5: Background and Foundational Learning

Maritime work often involves isolation, high stress, and long stretches away from home—factors that can increase the emotional toll of supporting someone who discloses sexual assault or harassment. Recognizing vicarious trauma and prioritizing self-care are essential for sustaining professionalism, empathy, and mental wellbeing while at sea.

Understanding Stress, Crisis, Trauma, and the Brain

Stress

Stress is the body's natural response to any demand or challenge. Not all stress is bad, which is why humans have physiological and psychological responses to manage stress. Remember, not all stress is trauma. However, excessive stress over time can lead to emotional, behavioral, and health problems.

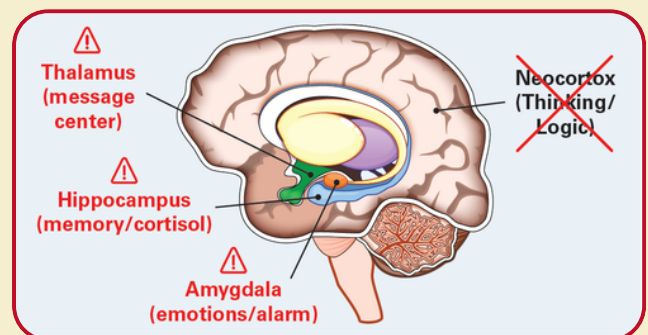
Trauma

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) states that individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that are experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening, and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Trauma is unique to each person and cannot be directly compared to that of others. Two individuals who experience a very similar trauma incident, even something as common as a minor car accident, can have significantly different responses.

Understanding the Brain During and After Trauma Exposure

The brain is a highly complex organ, but in discussions of trauma, it can be broken down into three main sections: the neocortex, the brainstem, and the limbic system. The **neocortex** enables us to think and reason logically, but it is not fully developed until a person reaches their early to mid-20s. The **brain stem** controls basic survival functions and is activated during a crisis. The **limbic system** manages senses, emotions, motivation, memory, and learning. These different sections of the brain work together to manage every situation. However, there are parts within these sections that have a critical role when experiencing trauma.



Typically, in a relaxed state, the **thalamus** receives sensory messages (such as sound, sight, and touch) and sends them to the neocortex for processing. The **amygdala** then provides the appropriate emotional response based on the processed information, and the hippocampus stores that memory, including the associated feelings and context. The graphic above shows a brain that feels threatened or someone who is experiencing trauma.

When the brain feels threatened, sensory information is sent simultaneously to both the neocortex and the amygdala. The amygdala “alarms” and initiates the “fight, flight, or freeze” response before the neocortex can respond.

This releases stress hormones, such as cortisol, that help the body respond to the threat, and the hippocampus changes its focus from memory storage to pumping cortisol to support the body.

The brain’s internal response is only the immediate response. However, the brain and body may have subsequent responses immediately following a singular traumatic incident, or the body could stay in a heightened sense of “survival mode” if someone is experiencing complex or chronic trauma. In any trauma, typical responses may include:

- Dreams and nightmares
- Irritability, anger, rage
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance
- Anxiety or panic
- Physical distress
- Depression
- Self-blame, guilt, shame
- Lack of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-worth
- Feeling hopeless
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Problems starting or maintaining healthy relationships

Symptoms from trauma can arise at different points and levels of severity in an individual’s life. Your response as a SASH Contact or Key Responder is imperative to decreasing further harm and trauma to a victim.

Counterintuitive Behaviors

Society, culture, and communities have created perceptions and expectations of what a “proper” response to sexual assault and sexual harassment should be. These expectations increase victim-blaming and minimize the complexity of trauma. These responses by a victim may be perceived as “improper,” but it is critical to remember that they are only that victim’s response to their trauma, and it is not wrong.

Some examples of counterintuitive behaviors include:

- Difficulty creating accurate timelines or sharing misinformation (can be perceived as “lying”)
- Forgetting important details
- Remaining in contact or in a relationship with the person
- No display of emotion
- Defending the abuser’s behavior
- Not reporting to law enforcement

Crisis

Crisis is not experienced in one way, and it is important to understand the difference to provide support. The physical and cognitive reactions to crisis are similar to those of trauma, but can also include chemical dump (oxytocin, adrenaline, cortisol), hyperventilation, dissociation, etc.

3 Elements of a Crisis

Situational

Based on the context of the situation, it can be from an immediate or past trauma or a combination of many stressful events.

Unexpected

The person is unprepared, or their standard coping mechanisms are failing.

Self-Defined

It is not the event but the unique individual's experience of the event that determines the crisis.

Crisis Intervention Model

The National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) Crisis Response Team Training™ outlines three steps to de-escalate a crisis through an emotional first-aid approach. These three steps are known as the crisis intervention model, and the steps are:

- **Safety and Security**
 - **Establish physical safety immediately**, ensuring not only that the victim is in a safe place but also that they feel safe.
 - **Respect the victim's right and need for privacy.** A sense of security is present when a person is assured they will not be judged and can begin to regain control over their mind and body.
- **Ventilation and Validation**
 - When the victim shares their emotions and concerns, they can **vent**.
 - **Validate** those emotions and concerns.
 - This requires patience, active listening skills, and the ability to process.
- **Prediction and Preparation**
 - Work with the victim to **predict future concerns** and challenges so that you can **prepare, safety-plan, and problem-solve** to prevent further crisis and trauma.
 - Promote empowerment by offering different options and encouraging the victim to make decisions.



Coping Mechanisms

Below is a comparison of healthy and unhealthy coping behaviors for stress and trauma for anyone, including victims, SASH responders, and leadership. Practicing healthy coping behaviors promotes a healthy and respectful workplace environment.

Healthy Coping Behaviors

- Exercising
- Journaling, self-care
- Acceptance of feelings/emotions
- Reconnecting to people and places
- Staying present
- Seeking support
- Developing self-interest

Unhealthy Coping Behaviors

- Substance abuse
- Neglecting personal appearance
- Fixating or obsessing over the past
- Denial and blame
- Constant crisis mode
- Poor impulse control
- Lack of awareness



Barriers to Reporting and Seeking Support

There are many barriers a victim may experience to reporting an experience of sexual assault or sexual harassment. Processing a traumatic experience or crisis while managing emotional, physical, and mental effects can be extremely difficult for victims and impact the reporting process. Additionally, barriers to reporting may be heightened when the workplace culture is toxic and fails to prioritize the safety, respect, and dignity of all personnel onboard. Common barriers to reporting include:

- Perceiving that the incident did not meet the victim's or society's definition of rape
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of being blamed or experiencing retaliation
- Fear of losing a support system
- Fear of the crew finding out or compromising the mission
- Fear that reporting would result in a lapse in sea-year training
- Fear that reporting would result in a loss of pay
- Location at time of incident
- Belief there would be a lack of accountability
- Lack of trust in leadership

Extensive research shows that only 2-10% of sexual assault reports are false. (Lisak et al., 2010)

Section 6: Vicarious Trauma & Self-Care

Being a SASH Contact or Key Responder can be deeply rewarding, but it also means being exposed to others' trauma, pain, and distress. Over time, this can take a toll on your emotional and physical well-being. It's essential to recognize this impact and take active care of yourself. This is not a sign of weakness—it is a professional responsibility.

Warning Signs and Definitions

Burnout Indicators

Burnout is a gradual process caused by chronic emotional and interpersonal stress at work. It is developed over time and is often associated with high caseloads, inadequate support, and unrealistic expectations.

- Emotional exhaustion
- Detachment from work
- Feeling ineffective or unmotivated
- Decline in job performance
- Irritability or dread

Secondary Trauma

Secondary trauma results from indirect exposure to someone else's traumatic experience. It can emerge suddenly after hearing or witnessing a victim's account.

Common reactions include:

- Nightmares or intrusive thoughts
- Emotional numbing or detachment
- Anxiety or fear
- Difficulty sleeping
- Withdrawal or irritability

Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma is the cumulative impact of repeated exposure to trauma, and it can disrupt one's worldview, identity, or beliefs. Examples include:

- Losing trust in others
- Feeling disconnected or hopeless
- Questioning one's faith or purpose
- Constant hyper-vigilance

Self-Care

Individual Self-Care Strategies:

- **Emotional:** talking to trusted peers, journaling, therapy
- **Physical:** sleep, hydration, movement
- **Spiritual:** mindfulness, prayer, meaning-making
- **Intellectual:** ongoing learning, healthy challenges
- **Social:** connecting with safe and supportive people

Organizational Support Can Include:

- Regular supervision and check-ins
- Healthy work-life balance
- Encouragement of time off
- Normalizing the impact of trauma work
- Opportunities for recognition



Check out the Self-Care Planning Worksheet for SASH Contacts and Key Responders on Page 43.

Section 7: Training & Credentialing

Recommended Training for SASH Contacts

The free 40-hour [SOCP SASH Contact Training Course](https://www.socp.us/sash-prevention) is available online through the SOCP website at <https://www.socp.us/sash-prevention>.

In partnership with the National Organization for Victim Advocacy, SOCP offers a comprehensive, 40-hour course for Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) Contacts in the U.S. maritime industry. Designed to meet the Every Mariner Builds A Respectful Culture (EMBARC) Standards Program, the course covers:

- Trauma-informed response
- Reporting requirements and documentation
- Investigation and disciplinary processes
- Victim-centered communication
- Maritime-specific dynamics
- Referrals and long-term support

While the 40-hour course serves as a foundational training, ongoing learning is encouraged. Consider additional CEUs or professional development through resources listed in Section 8 under "Web Resources and Reading List."



Recommended Training for Key Responders

While Key Responders are not expected to complete the full 40-hour [SOCP SASH Contact Training Course](https://www.socp.us/sash-prevention), they should be familiar with SASH protocols, reporting requirements, and trauma-informed leadership.

At a minimum, Key Responders should review and understand:

- SOCP SASH Desk Reference Guide
- SOCP SASH Annual Computer-Based Training (CBT)
- Their Company's Safety Management System (SMS) policies related to SASH prevention and response
- Vessel-specific protocols or onboard reporting chains

Company training departments may encourage Key Responders to review portions of the 40-hour SASH Contact training to enhance their understanding of the victim experience and onboard response standards.



NACP Credentialing

The National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) was launched in October 2003 and has since credentialed over 10,000 civilian victim advocates. NACP is open to any individual, paid or volunteer, who provides services to victims of crime and meets the standardized training requirements. No experience in the field is required. NACP recognizes advocates' years of experience and requires continuing education for all advocates credentialed under the program.

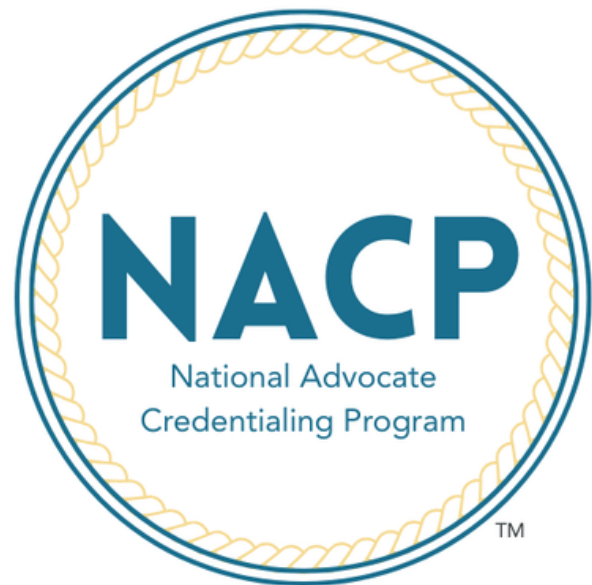
After receiving a minimum of 40 hours of approved training, individuals apply for a 2-year, renewable credential in one of four levels:

- **Provisional**
- **Basic**
- **Intermediate**
- **Advanced**

The National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) has developed a 40-hour course that has been pre-approved by NACP. The course titled "SASH Contact Training Course is free and available online at: <https://www.socp.us/sash-prevention>.

Advocates are required to complete 32 continuing education units (CEUs) within 2 years of receiving their credential from NACP. CEUs can be obtained by attending workshops, conferences, seminars, in-service training sessions, or webinars that are relevant to providing direct services to crime victims. Special attention should be given to training that is specific to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

For more information or to apply: [www. thenacp.org](http://www.thenacp.org)



Section 8: Reference Material

Glossary

Culture: the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.

Sexual Assault: Intentional touching of a sexual nature against the will (by use of force, physical threat, coercive behavior, or abuse of authority), or without the consent of another person, or where that person is incapacitated (e.g., "passed out," sleeping, or impaired due to the use of alcohol or drugs, including prescription medications) or otherwise incapable of giving consent. The victim can be of any sex, and the alleged offender of the sexual assault can be of the same or different sex.

Sexual assault includes, but is not limited to:

- Kissing, touching, groping, or other intentional contact with the breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals (over or under an individual's clothing) for purposes of sexual gratification or when such private body parts are otherwise touched in a sexual manner
- Anal, oral, or vaginal penetration, however slight, with a body part (e.g., penis, finger, hand, or tongue) or an object - this prohibited and illegal behavior is commonly known as "rape"
- Sexual contact with someone who is under the age of consent in the jurisdiction in which the sexual assault occurs

Although the majority of victims are under the age of 30, sexual assault can affect anyone, regardless of age, race, sex, or socio-economic status.



Sexual Harassment: Any unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual acts, or verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such behavior is made as a condition of an individual's employment or academic standing
- Submission to, or rejection of, such behavior by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting such individuals
- Such behavior has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment

Workplace Violence: Act or threat of violence ranging from verbal abuse to physical assault directed towards persons at work or on duty. The impact of workplace violence can range from psychological issues to physical injuries or even death. **The transportation industry is one of the industries that is at a higher risk of fatal workplace violence.**

Acronym Quick Reference

CGIS: Coast Guard Investigative Service

DHS: U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security

DOJ: U.S. Dept. of Justice

DOT: U.S. Dept. of Transportation

EEOC: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

EMBARC: Every Mariner Builds A Respectful Culture

LEA: Law Enforcement Agency

MARAD: Maritime Administration

MCIO: Military Criminal Investigation Organization

MMC: Merchant Mariner Credential

NCC: National Command Center

NCIS: Naval Criminal Investigative Service

NDAA: National Defense Authorization Act

SAPR: Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

SAPRO: SAPR Office

SARC: Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

SASH: Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

SMA: State Maritime Academy

SMS: Safety Management System

SOCP: Ship Operations Cooperative Program

USCG: U.S. Coast Guard

USMMA: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

Additional Resources

SASH Support Resources



www.socp.us/sash-resources

Prevention materials



www.socp.us/sash-prevention

Additional information about the EMBARC Standards Program can be found at

www.maritime.dot.gov/EMBARC



Section 8: Reference Material

Glossary

Sexual Assault: Sexual Assault is a crime of violence defined as intentional touching of a sexual nature against the will (by use of force, physical threat, coercive conduct, or abuse of authority), or without the consent of another person, or where that person is incapacitated (e.g., “passed out,” sleeping, or impaired due to the use of alcohol or drugs, including prescription medications) or otherwise incapable of giving consent. The other person can be male or female and the perpetrator of the sexual assault can be of the same or opposite sex.

Sexual assault includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual intercourse, including anal, oral, or vaginal penetration, however slight, with a body part (e.g., penis, finger, hand, or tongue) or an object;
- Kissing, touching, groping, fondling, or other intentional contact with the breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals (over or under an individual’s clothing) for purposes of sexual gratification or when such private body parts are otherwise touched in a sexual manner;
- Sexual contact with someone who is unable to say “no” and/or change their mind due to the presence of coercion or intimidation; or
- Sexual contact with someone who is under the age of consent in the jurisdiction in which the sexual assault occurs.

Although the majority of victims are under the age of 30, sexual assault can affect anyone, regardless of age, race, sex, or socio-economic status.



Sexual Harassment: is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, graphic, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, including, but not limited to the following:

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is either an explicit or implicit term or condition of an individual’s employment or advancement in employment, evaluation of academic work or advancement in an academic program, or basis for participation in any aspect of an Academy program or activity, including shipboard training (quid pro quo);
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for decisions affecting the individual (quid pro quo); or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s learning, working, or living environment; in other words, it is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent as to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning, working, or living environment under both an objective—a reasonable person’s view—and subjective—the Complainant’s view—standard (hostile environment).

Acronym Quick Reference

CGIS: Coast Guard Investigative Service

DHS: U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security

DOJ: U.S. Dept. of Justice

DOT: U.S. Dept. of Transportation

EEOC: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

EMBARC: Every Mariner Builds A Respectful Culture

LEA: Law Enforcement Agency

MARAD: Maritime Administration

MCIO: Military Criminal Investigation Organization

MMC: Merchant Mariner Credential

NCC: National Command Center

NCIS: Naval Criminal Investigative Service

NDAA: National Defense Authorization Act

SAPR: Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

SAPRO: SAPR Office

SARC: Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

SASH: Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

SMA: State Maritime Academy

SMS: Safety Management System

SOCPP: Ship Operations Cooperative Program

USCG: U.S. Coast Guard

USMMA: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

Additional Resources

SASH Support Resources



www.socp.us/sash-resources

Prevention materials



www.socp.us/sash-prevention

Additional information about the EMBARC Standards Program can be found at

www.maritime.dot.gov/EMBARC



Templates, Tip Sheets, & Checklists

The following resources are designed as stand-alone, quick-reference tools to support you in real time. Whether you're responding to a disclosure, planning a safety response, documenting an incident, or taking care of yourself afterward, these print-friendly guides offer practical steps, language tips, and helpful reminders.

Tip Sheet Title	Use Case	Page
Reporting Options Quick Reference Guide	Helps to quickly compare SASH reporting types, contacts, and outcomes. Use when unsure where to report or when explaining options to others.	35
Sample Intake Form for SASH Reports	Documenting a disclosure after it occurs in a consistent, structured format.	36
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Reporting Options Quick Reference Guide

This tool helps mariners, cadets, and personnel understand the different types of reporting options available when a SASH (Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment) incident occurs. Use this sheet to identify what kind of report you are making, who to notify, what happens next, and how to reach them.

Contact info may be customized by each company or vessel.

Type of Report	Report To	What Happens Next	Contact Info
Anonymous Tip	U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS)	May trigger internal inquiry if enough detail is provided; identity not required.	CGIS Tips Line: 833-200-4387 www.uscg.mil/units/cgis
Criminal Report	CGIS or Local Law Enforcement	May initiate a criminal investigation. The victim may be contacted for follow-up.	CGIS: 202-372-2100; cgistips@uscg.mil Foreign Port: 1-888-407-4747 (from U.S. or Canada) +1-202-501-4444 (from overseas) U.S. Embassy Locator – www.usembassy.gov
Administrative Report	SASH Contact, Supervisor, USMMA or SMA Staff	Triggers internal investigation per company or academy policy. May require Coast Guard notification.	Company-Specific USMMA SAPR Office sapro@usmma.edu (516) 462-3207 State Maritime Academy https://www.maritime.dot.gov/maritime-workforce/maritime-education
EEOC Complaint	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)	Reviews charges alleging violations of Federal employment law and may conduct an investigation or pursue other action as appropriate, which can result in legal remedies	EEOC: 800-669-4000 eeoc.gov

Reporting Options for USMMA Cadets

Restricted Report	Unrestricted Report
Does not trigger an official investigation	Triggers official administrative and/or criminal investigation
Shared only with SAPRO and other support services as requested	Shared with SAPRO, other support services as requested and reported to CGIS, Company and/or Academy investigators
Victim receives advocacy, healthcare, and other support services without initiating an investigation	Victim Advocacy, healthcare, and other support services throughout an investigation
Prioritizes privacy and limited disclosure	Prioritizes safety, justice, and accountability

Note: Only specific individuals (e.g., USMMA SARC or Victim Advocates) can receive a Restricted Report. Reporting to a supervisor, SASH Contact, or CGIS is always Unrestricted.

Additional Notes

- A single disclosure may result in both criminal and administrative processes, depending on the nature of the allegations and applicable jurisdiction Review Section 3 of the SOCP Desk Reference Guide for more information.
- SASH Contacts are mandatory reporters and cannot promise confidentiality.
- Vessel operators should ensure that the contact information on this page is regularly updated and a copy is readily accessible aboard their vessels.

1. Basic Information

Date of Intake: _____ Time/Time Zone of Intake: _____

Location (Ship/Port): _____

Name of Ship: _____

SASH Contact Name: _____

2. Person Making the Report

Name (if shared): _____

Email & Phone: _____

Circle One: Cadet / Crew / Other: _____

Affiliation/Company (if applicable): _____

Age (if known): _____

3. Incident Details (As Stated)

Record only what the individual chooses to share. Use their words as much as possible. Do not press for details.

Date/Time of Incident (if shared): _____

Location of Incident: _____

Brief description of what was shared (use additional pages if necessary, and indicate there are additional pages). Do not include assumptions, opinions, or your own conclusions.

4. Immediate Needs or Concerns

☐ Emotional support needed

☐ Medical assistance requested

☐ Safety concerns:

☐ Safety accommodations made (describe):

☐ Privacy accommodations requested and made (describe):

☐ Other:

5. Alleged Involved Party (if disclosed) Only complete if the victim **voluntarily** shares this information.

Name (if known): _____ Position/Role (if known): _____

Circle One: Cadet / Crew / Other: _____

Affiliation/Company (if applicable): _____

6. Actions Taken by SASH Contact/Key Responder

- ☐ Explained SASH Contact role and reporting responsibilities
- ☐ Reviewed reporting options (company, CGIS, law enforcement, academy, etc.)
- ☐ Reviewed safety plan or accommodations
- ☐ Provided support resources or referrals
- ☐ Reported incident to required agency (specify):
- ☐ Other:

7. Notes for Internal Documentation

Use this space to document any relevant follow-up details.

This form is to be completed together, by the SASH Contact/Key Responder and the SASH victim, after a SASH report is made. This worksheet is not mandatory or exhaustive. Each safety plan should be individualized, flexible, and victim-led. It should be reviewed regularly and updated as circumstances change to ensure continued safety and support.

Reminders for SASH Contact/Key Responder:

- Victims may not respond to every question or fill in every line.
- This worksheet serves as a tool to guide supportive conversations and planning.
- Always ask before writing anything down.
- Respect victim privacy and autonomy.
- Save or store this only with the victim's permission.

1. Immediate Safety Concerns

- Do you feel safe where you currently sleep or work?
- Are there any specific individuals you are concerned about encountering?
- Do you have immediate safety concerns related to retaliation or escalation?

2. Safe Locations Onboard

- Identify spaces where you feel safe (e.g., your cabin, bridge, mess hall).
- Are there any locations you would like to avoid?
- Do you need assistance arranging a shift in work area or schedule?

3. Emotional Safety

- Is there someone onboard you trust to talk to or check in with?
- Would you feel safer using a "buddy system" for certain areas/tasks?
- Do you have ways to decompress in your cabin (e.g., music, journal)?

4. Trusted Contacts / Support Network

- Is there someone (onboard or ashore) you want to talk to regularly?
- Are there friends, family, or shipmates you can reach out to for support?
- Would you like access to hotlines or text-based support services?

5. Coping and Self-Care Tools

- What has helped you cope with stress or fear in the past?
- What calms you when you feel overwhelmed?
- Would you like suggestions for grounding or calming techniques?

6. Personal Protection

- Would you like to document the incident or keep a log of further concerns?
- Do you need to be connected with local resources for options like obtaining an order of protection?
- Is there a place you can store important documents or belongings safely?

7. Follow-Up Planning

- Would you like check-ins from the SASH Contact during the voyage?
- If you disembark or transfer, do you want a safety plan for that transition?
- Is there anyone you'd like to notify ashore for follow-up care?

What to Say & What Not to Say

Effective Communication Tips for SASH Contacts and Key Responders

This tip sheet is a quick reference to help SASH Contacts communicate effectively and empathetically when responding to a disclosure of sexual assault or sexual harassment (SASH). Use these guidelines to provide trauma-informed, respectful, and empowering support.

Things to Say

- ✓ "Thank you for telling me. I'm here to help."
- ✓ "You're not alone. Let's talk through your options together."
- ✓ "You didn't do anything wrong."
- ✓ "You're in control of what happens next."
- ✓ "I believe you."
- ✓ "Let's talk about your safety right now."

Things to Avoid Saying

- ✗ "Are you sure that's what happened?"
- ✗ "Why didn't you tell anyone sooner?"
- ✗ "You need to report this right away."
- ✗ "That doesn't sound like something they would do."
- ✗ "Try not to think about it too much."
- ✗ Interrupting or changing the subject mid-disclosure.

Special Considerations for Communication Onboard

- **Location:** Seek a location where you can speak without drawing attention. Avoid enclosed, isolated spaces that might make the other person feel unsafe.
- **Privacy:** Be mindful of who might overhear or observe your conversation.
- **Boundaries:** Respect personal space—don't touch or move closer without explicit permission.
- **Awareness:** Consider nonverbal cues that suggest discomfort or distress.
- **Follow-Up:** Normalize checking in later when more privacy can be arranged.

Your sensitivity to these factors reinforces safety, trust, and respect.



What to Watch For (and What to Do)

Toxic behaviors and norms on ships can escalate from inappropriate jokes to serious incidents of SASH. This tip sheet helps you identify harmful patterns and take steps to shift the culture toward safety and respect.



Red Flags in Behavior and Culture

- Dismissing complaints as “jokes” or overreactions.
- Teasing or name-calling.
- Power imbalances used to intimidate or coerce.
- Retaliation or ostracism after someone speaks up.
- Leaders who avoid or minimize discussions about SASH.
- Lack of visible SASH policies or materials posted.

How to Disrupt or Address Red Flags

- Model respectful behavior at all times.
- Use active bystander techniques: distract, delegate, delay, direct.
- Call in (not out) peers when they cross the line.
- Document repeated concerns and notify trusted supervisors.
- Ask leadership for policy reminders or training refreshers.
- Support victims without requiring them to lead culture change.

Why It Matters

A respectful shipboard culture improves retention, trust, and operational performance. Unchecked SASH behaviors increase risk, harm, and liability. Every crew member plays a role in making maritime environments safer.

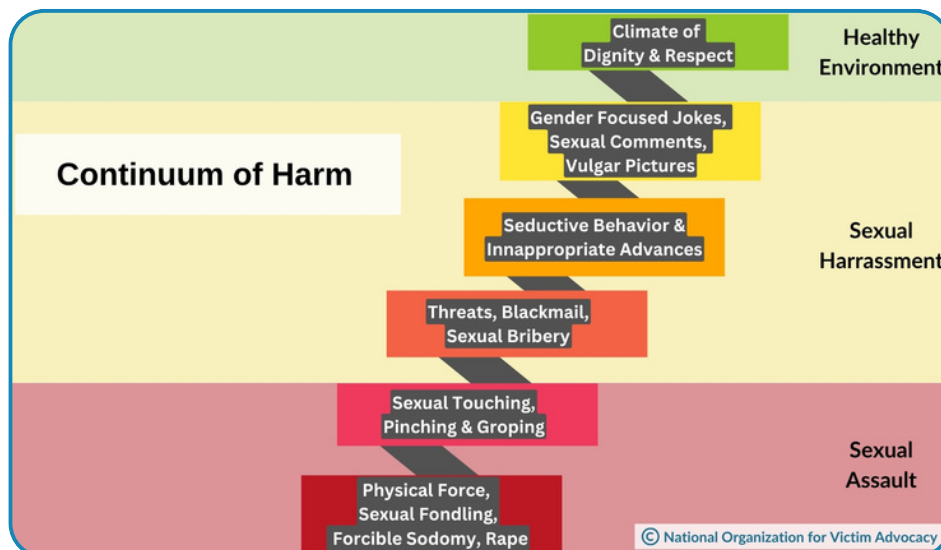
EMBARC: Every Mariner
Builds A Respectful Culture

Continuum of Harm

Consider using the Continuum of Harm framework to assess whether a behavior contributes to a respectful or harmful workplace. By identifying where the behavior falls, you can better determine how to intervene or support change.

Practicing the Continuum of Harm framework fosters a safe, respectful, and productive environment. Ask yourself:

- Was the behavior respectful and consensual?
- Could it make someone feel uncomfortable, isolated, or unsafe?
- Is it part of a pattern or culture of harassment?
- Does it reinforce power imbalances or exclusion?



Use this worksheet to reflect on how stress and trauma may be impacting you, and to identify practical ways to care for your well-being.

1. Personal Check-In

- a. What signs or symptoms do I notice when I'm feeling overwhelmed or emotionally drained?

- b. What recent situations have increased my stress or caused emotional fatigue?

2. Self-Care Inventory

- a. What activities or habits help me feel calm, grounded, or replenished?

- b. What is one self-care strategy I used this past week? Did it help?

3. Boundaries and Support

- a. What personal boundaries do I need to maintain to protect my energy and emotional well-being?

- b. Who can I talk to when I need to process something or ask for support?

4. Weekly Self-Care Goals

- a. This week, I will...

- b. One thing I will say "no" to in order to preserve my well-being is...

Tip: Revisit this worksheet at the end of your week or duty assignment.
Reflect on what helped and what you want to keep practicing.

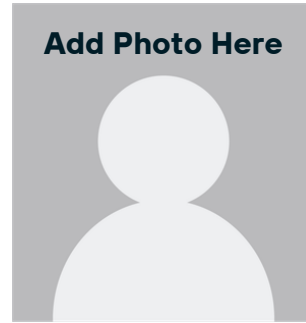


We Are Your SASH Contacts

Add Photo Here



Add Photo Here



Key Contacts Aboard

Captain / Master: _____

Designated Person Ashore (DPA): _____

Chief Mate or Safety Officer: _____

Medical / Health Point of Contact: _____

Additional Contacts:

CGIS Tips Hotline: 833-200-4387

U.S. Coast Guard Reporting Portal: <https://www.p3tips.com/878>

EEOC: www.eeoc.gov

Foreign Port U.S. Embassy Locator: www.usembassy.gov



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SASH CONTACT



Add Photo Here



Key Contacts Aboard

Captain / Master: _____

Designated Person Ashore (DPA): _____

Chief Mate or Safety Officer: _____

Medical / Health Point of Contact: _____

Additional Contacts:

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Resources for Support, Reporting, and Recovery



If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, sexual harassment, bullying, or related misconduct, help is available—both afloat and ashore. These resources offer immediate crisis support, reporting pathways, legal assistance, and specialized help for mariners and cadets.

You can also access these resources and more at www.socp.us/sash-resources.

Maritime-Specific and Government Resources

USMMA Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO)

24/7 confidential crisis line for USMMA cadets and community members.

(516) 462-3207 sapro@usmma.edu usmma.edu – SAPRO

Maritime Administration (MARAD) Office of Civil Rights

To report civil rights violations or discrimination involving maritime training or operations.

civilrights.marad.dot.gov maritime.dot.gov – File a Complaint

U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS)

For anonymous and formal reporting of criminal maritime activity, including SASH.

CGIS Tips: (833) 200-4387 <https://www.p3tips.com/878>

U.S. Department of Education – Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

For concerns related to discrimination or Title IX violations at maritime academies.

(800) 421-3481 ocr@ed.gov File an OCR Complaint

State Maritime Academies (SMA) Title IX Offices

Contact your academy's Title IX coordinator for supportive measures and reporting options.

Confidential Support and Hotlines

National Sexual Assault Hotline (RAINN)

Free, anonymous, 24/7 support for anyone affected by sexual violence.

(800) 656-HOPE (4673) rainn.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Support for those experiencing domestic abuse or unhealthy relationships.

(800) 799-SAFE (7233) thehotline.org

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

For individuals in emotional distress, experiencing suicidal thoughts, or needing mental health support.

Dial 988 988lifeline.org



Confidential Support and Hotlines, cont.

DoD Safe Helpline

For military-affiliated victims of sexual assault.

(877) 995-5247 [safehelpline.org](https://www.safehelpline.org)

Deaf Hotline

For members of the Deaf community affected by domestic or sexual violence.

(855) 812-1001 thedeafhotline.org

1in6

Support for male-identified victims of sexual abuse or assault.

1in6.org

Helping Victims of Sexual Abuse & Assault

Comprehensive online resource for victims, loved ones, and professionals.

helpingsurvivors.org

Women Offshore S.A.V.E. Program

Sexual Assault & Violence Eradication Program supporting women in offshore roles.

womenoffshore.org/SAVE

International Resources

Pathways to Safety International

Offers interpersonal violence response services to Americans living or traveling overseas

pathwaystosafety.org

U.S. Embassy Locator

Online tool to find the nearest U.S. embassy, diplomatic mission, consulate, or office.

(202) 501-4444 (overseas) (888) 407-4747 (U.S./Canada) usembassy.gov





**STOP
SEXUAL
ASSAULT
SEXUAL
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