

Privacy Overview

DoD Safe Helpline
Sexual Assault Support for the DoD Community

Introduction

Victim support is a key component of the Department of Defense's (DoD) sexual assault prevention and response policy. As part of that victim care, the Department launched the DoD Safe Helpline, a crisis support service for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. Available worldwide 24/7, users can connect with Safe Helpline for anonymous and confidential support. Safe Helpline is administered by DoD via a contract with the non-profit Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization.

User Protection Key Component

Safe Helpline is built on an innovative communications infrastructure from the ground up that integrates security and anonymity at every level. Several features have been built in to provide this unique support, including:

- The online helpline does not capture the IP address of users, which means that no records will ever be kept of the online session.
- No transcripts are saved after online sessions, so once the user closes the chat window, that text is not retrievable.
- All data is encrypted to ensure that the online text cannot be intercepted and read while in transition.

The online helpline uses anonymous routing methods to obscure the connection between the user and the online helpline staff member through the use of unique codes.

Before using online Safe Helpline services, users are provided an easy-to-read statement of the privacy policy and terms of service. Users are required to "Accept" this statement before entering the site.

Captures Only Voluntarily Offered User Information

Every precaution possible has been taken to protect users' privacy. Safe Helpline does not ask for information that can be used to identify a user, such as name or address. Online sessions or telephone calls are not recorded or stored. Information that is volunteered will be aggregated and provided to DoD SAPRO to assist in program evaluation.

If Safe Helpline staff feels the user is in danger of committing suicide, under the age of 18, or otherwise required by law, Safe Helpline staff may have to provide the information that was given by a user to the appropriate authorities.

Confidentiality Protection

Prior to entering into an online helpline session, online helpline users are provided detailed instructions on additional steps they can take to ensure they are operating under the highest of security measures and can clear private data from their computers after ending their online session. Several innovative technologies were utilized to help protect users.

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