

**Main Purposes of the SVC Program:**

- Provide Advice => Develop victims' understanding of the investigatory and military justice processes
- Provide Advocacy => Protect the rights afforded to victims in the military justice system
- Empower Victims => Remove barriers to victims' full participation in the military justice process

**SVC Program Objectives:**

- 1) Provide Support Through Independent Representation
- 2) Build and Sustain Victim Resiliency
- 3) Empower Victims
- 4) Increase Level of Legal Assistance Provided to Victims

**Background:**

On 9 November 2012, the General Counsel for the Secretary of Defense issued a memo addressing "Legal Assistance to Victims of Sexual Assault." The memo addressed the scope of legal assistance that may legally be provided by judge advocates (and supported by paralegals) to victims of sexual assault. The memo concludes that "to the extent the victim could retain the advice or representation of private counsel, [10 U.S.C.] §§ 1044 and 1565(b) authorizes, and certainly does not prohibit, JAGs from providing the same legal advice and representation, to the same extent." The memo also states, "when read together, 1044 and 1565(b) authorize, and certainly do not preclude, legal assistance to a victim of a sexual assault in criminal contexts, including attending interviews of the victim and interfacing with military prosecutors, defense counsel and investigators." This memo gave the JAG Corps authority to create a Special Victims' Counsel (SVC) Program.

In December 2012, the Air Force JAG Corps became the first in the Department of Defense (DoD) to select and train a cadre of around 55 JAGs as SVCs. These JAGs took on the role of SVCs as an additional duty representing victim of sexual assault from the end of January 2013 to the summer of 2013. After the initial success of the SVC Program, the Air Force JAG Corps created a permanent SVC Program and assigned JAGs to full-time SVC positions. During this time, the Army, Navy, Marines, and Coast followed the Air Force's lead and create their own SVC Programs.

Today, the Air Force leads the DoD through its SVC Program as another means to combat sexual assault in the military. By 2017, the Air Force's SVC Program is expected to increase in size to approximately 50 SVCs with close to as many Special Victim Paralegals (SVPs) worldwide.

**Examples of Representation Offered to Victims:**

Civil Legal Matters  
Courts-Martial  
Article 32 Pretrial Investigations  
Interviews with Victims  
Depositions  
Court of Inquiry  
Post-Trial Matters

Clemency and Parole Boards  
Investigations  
Article 138  
Notaries and Administrative Oaths  
Civilian Criminal Jurisdiction Advice  
Foreign Criminal Jurisdiction Advice  
Advocate to the Media on Behalf of Victim  
May Assist with Certain Collateral Misconduct

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