Navy focuses on prevention, reporting during Domestic Violence Awareness Month

By Bruce Moody, Navy Family Readiness Program, Commander, Navy Installations Command Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – The Navy is observing Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October as an opportunity to inform Sailors and Navy spouses about domestic violence prevention efforts as well as reporting options for victims.

Domestic violence encompasses all age groups and social classes, and can happen to Sailors as well as spouses and to men as well as women.

Domestic violence can stem beyond physical abuse. It includes emotional abuse such as threats, isolation, extreme jealousy and humiliation and can also include sexual abuse.

Whenever an adult is placed in physical danger or controlled by threat or use of physical force by their spouse or intimate partner, she or he has been abused. The risk for abuse is greatest when victims are separated from supportive networks.

Photo courtesy of Publik15

"Our goal is to prevent domestic violence by encouraging people to examine their own behavior and take steps to learn and practice more healthy behaviors," said Melvina Thornton, manager of the Counseling Advocacy and Prevention (CAP) program. CAP is part of Commander, Navy Installation Command's Fleet and Family Support Program.

Much is misunderstood about what happens when a Sailor or spouse seeks help for their relationship before domestic violence occurs.

Many couples can have arguments. Making an appointment for couples' counseling does not automatically result in the creation of a Family Advocacy Program (FAP) case. Nor does family or couple's counseling harm one's career or security clearance.

The Department of Defense changed the question on its long-standing security clearance form referencing an applicant's mental health history. As of 2008, Standard Form 86, the Questionnaire for National Security Positions no longer asks for mental health treatment details if the care involved only marital, family, or grief counseling, not related to violence by the applicant, unless the treatment was court-ordered.

Another myth is that counseling is only sought by people who have been arrested or are filing for divorce. Through counseling, however, adults can learn to treat their partners with compassion and respect and avoid manipulation and criticism, even during arguments.

Professional services of licensed counselors are available free of charge at Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC). These are available to active duty and their family members - even Sailors who are unmarried can have couple's counseling with their partners.

A variety of courses that teach healthy relationship skills are also available through FFSCs. These include anger management and conflict resolution. These are also free and available to both active duty military and spouses.

"These services are available because the Navy believes strongly in the importance of the prevention of abusive behavior," said Thornton . Thornton has a simple message to those who are considering asking for help. Don't wait.

"Sailors who succeed with their careers and their families have the strength to ask for help before a problem gets out of hand," she Thornton. "The Navy knows this, which is why they provide places to get help."

Help is also available for victims of domestic abuse.

There are two types of reporting options, restricted and unrestricted. Restricted reports do not involve military chain of command or law enforcement. Unrestricted reports will include some type of investigation by command and or law enforcement.

Both options make available to victims the full range of advocacy, medical and counseling services. Speak with a counselor of victim advocate at a local Fleet and Family Support Center or a healthcare provider at a military treatment facility about restricted and unrestricted reporting options for domestic violence.

If you think you may be a victim of domestic violence, you can anonymously contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. Sailors or their spouses can also call or visit any Fleet and Family Support Center for information on available resources. Locate a Fleet and Family Support Center at http://www.ffsp.navy.mil.

Two ways to honor female military health system physicians

By Rebecca Russell, MHS Chief Human Capital Office

Nominations are currently being accepted for a "Building Stronger Female Physician Leaders in the MHS (Military Health System)" award.

There will be a junior winner from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service and one senior MHS-wide winner.

The deadline for submitting applications to the Chief Human Capital Office is midnight Eastern Standard Time, Oct. 28.

The services collect all nominations and assess them throughout their chains of command before they are forwarded to Rebecca Russell, the award point of contact.

Russell is available to answer questions related to nominations at 703-681-8805.

Additionally, the MHS Female Physicians Leadership Board will host its second annual leadership course, Jan. 28-29, 2012 at the Gaylord National Convention Center near Washington.

The course is offered in conjunction with the annual MHS Conference and provides interactive leadership opportunities to emerging active duty female physician-leaders.

The course aims to help them develop more senior level healthcare management skills that will benefit them and the medical treatment facilities (MTF's) where they work. Space for the course is limited. MTF commanders should submit nomination packages no later than 11:00 p.m., EST, Nov. 8, 2011.

Multiple nominees from a single MTF will be accepted and should be sent to Rebecca Russell, or Wanda Oka.

To learn more about the leadership course contact the program director, Col. Linda Lawrence.

Both the "Building Stronger Female Physician Leaders in the MHS" award and the pre-conference leadership course are great ways to recognize the brightest and most promising female physician leaders in the MHS.