

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**ABOUT THE FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM**  
**FY 04 SPOUSE ABUSE DATA**

**Q: How much spouse abuse occurs that involves Service members?**

A: The Department of Defense keeps track of how many incidents of spouse abuse are reported to the Family Advocacy Program. We do not know what spouse abuse and other domestic abuse goes unreported.

**Q: How does the Department of Defense count spouse abuse incidents?**

A: Since 1997, we have counted incidents of suspected spouse abuse that have been reported to the Family Advocacy Program at each installation. Prior to 1997, we counted cases of suspected spouse abuse reported to the installations' Family Advocacy Programs. Each case could include more than one incident of suspected abuse. With an incident-based system, we can calculate how many spouses within military families experience repeated abuse.

**Q: What types of spouse abuse are included in this data?**

A: The data includes physical and sexual abuse of a spouse, including acts of physical abuse in which no injury resulted. It also includes emotional abuse.

**Q: Are all the victims civilian spouses?**

A: No. Either the victim or the alleged abuser may be an active duty Service member or the civilian spouse of an active duty Service member.

**Q: How does the DoD data compare to data of domestic abuse from studies of civilians?**

A: Generally, the DoD data should not be compared to data from studies of civilians because there are significant differences in the designs of the studies. Let me give you three examples:

- The DoD data excludes reported or estimated abuse between dating couples, cohabiting but unmarried couples, and formerly married couples. Civilian studies almost always include these.
- The DoD data includes incidents of emotional abuse that occurred without any physical or sexual abuse, while most civilian studies include only physical or sexual abuse.

- The DoD demographics are usually much different from the demographics of the civilian studies. Family violence occurs more frequently in young couples, which are overrepresented in the military population.

Comparisons should not be made unless the study designs and populations are standardized.

**Q: How much domestic abuse between unmarried couples involves Service members?**

A: We have not collected that data in the Family Advocacy Program. The Family Advocacy Program has begun collecting that data for Fiscal Year 2005.

However, the Services have been implementing a law enforcement database, the Defense Incident-Based Reporting System (DIBRS), that will count reports of domestic abuse between unmarried couples that were made to military law enforcement agencies.

**Q: Why haven't you collected data on domestic abuse between unmarried couples that involves Service members?**

A: The Family Advocacy Program was designed to provide services to victims who are eligible for military benefits. These benefits are limited by law to family members, so we focused on counting incidents of abuse that involve family members.

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