

National Science Foundation

NSF Actions in Response to Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention Issues in the United States Antarctic Program (USAP)

1. **Single Communication Point at NSF for Sexual Assault/Harassment Matters**

Director has directed the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) to create a Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response (SAHPR) office to act as the **single communication point** for the USAP and to properly refer all sexual assault/harassment matters. This single focal point will provide **a safety net** for ensuring access to resource materials and preventing miscommunication regarding reporting lines and **building trust** for all leadership and management structures. OECR will coordinate as appropriate with the Office of Polar Programs (OPP), Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for any criminal or administrative matters that require other action.

2. **Resources for Victims**

NSF is providing immediate resources, including a **point person in Antarctica to directly support deployed personnel** for matters relating to sexual assault and harassment. The **SAHPR program function is independent of OPP** and is funded and managed directly by the Office of the Director.

3. **Antarctic Site Presence and Visits**

NSF OD/OECR leadership will deploy early in the operating season (late-October/early-November) to Antarctica to oversee the **installation of the deployed SAHPR Support Office function** and to conduct listening sessions, meet one-on-one with personnel.

NSB and senior NSF personnel are scheduled to travel to Antarctica after the December NSB meeting. The on-ice schedule will include a **town hall session at McMurdo and South Pole Stations** during which the agency actions will be discussed. The group will also solicit feedback from deployed personnel.

4. **Increased Vetting**

NSF is improving existing background investigation procedures for all deploying personnel to ensure that **all personnel pass a criminal background check** and have not been disciplined by their employers.

5. **Accountability**

Any entity with personnel deployed to Antarctica – federal agency, military, contractor, academic institution **must provide a cognizant senior official outside the local/field unit** to coordinate with OECR for immediate response to any reports of sexual assault or harassment.

6. **Improved Training**

The deployment program for all personnel is being updated to include **new and revised trainings** on sexual harassment and assault prevention and response, including situations

applicable to work at a remote field station. These updates include bystander and intervention training, as well as awareness and instructions on reporting and where to obtain support.

7. Enhanced Security Measures on the Ice

Physical security measures are being implemented in Antarctica in response to comments in the SAHPR report including, but not limited to: installation of additional peepholes in doors, improved key management and controls for master keys, and additional satellite communications options and protocols for deep field site personnel.

8. Director's USAP Task Force on Sexual Assault/Harassment

The NSF Director has established a **Task Force on harassment in the USAP to immediately coordinate and integrate the operational and strategic elements of the agency response.** The Task Force consists of NSF staff and will provide reports to the Director on a weekly basis.