
Melissa Cohen



Director, Department of the Navy Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office

As the Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, Ms. Cohen is the principal advisor to the Secretary of the Navy on issues pertaining to the prevention of and response to sexual assault, domestic abuse and sexual harassment.

Ms. Cohen entered the Senior Executive Service in January 2019. Prior to her current position, she was the Director of the Personnel Studies and Oversight office for the United States Marine Corps. There she served as an advisor to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, recommending needed policy changes to enhance efforts to attract, assign and retain talented Marines, civilians and Sailors.

Ms. Cohen started her Marine Corps career in 2010 with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program at the Headquarters level. As Branch Head, she was responsible for all policy, training, and supportive services. Ms. Cohen provided guidance on violence prevention and response strategies, working in close partnership with leaders across the Department of Defense.

Ms. Cohen has served in a number of leadership positions in the non-profit sector. Earlier in her career, she was an Executive Director for a counseling agency for at-risk individuals and families. She was also the Coordinator for the first Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) Center in Wake County, North Carolina. In that capacity she ensured coordinated crisis response care for survivors of sexual assault and served as the Chairperson for the Sexual Assault Response Team.

Ms. Cohen received her Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from the University of Florida (UF) in 1994 and her Master of Education (M.Ed.) and Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degrees, with a counseling focus, from UF in 1996. She was awarded the Department of the Navy Superior Civilian Service Award and Meritorious Civilian Service Award.