



# *The Judge Advocate General's School Master Curriculum Plan: Special Victims' Counsel Course*

*Course Code: SVC*

*February 2016*

**Instructions:** *The Master Curriculum Plan is the charter for the course. Course Directors use the Plan to make decisions about curriculum content, including preparation of new lessons and revising existing ones, evaluation methods, identifying support requirements, and constructing course schedules. The Plan is available for review by JAGC members, their supervisors, CLE and other accrediting authorities, and others seeking information about JAG School courses and methods.*

## **A. General Information**

Location: The Judge Advocate General's School, Maxwell AFB AL.

Length of course: 8 days.

Student quota and profile: 60. Newly assigned Special Victims' Counsel (SVC) and Special Victims' Paralegals (SVP), providing representational legal assistance to victims of sexual assault and other sex crimes. When practical, SVCs and SVPs assigned to the same office will attend at the same time.

## **B. Strategic Course Direction**

**Instructions:** *Set out the elements of the Strategic Course Direction as provided below. Consider them carefully, as each decision on the course must be consistent with the stated mission, vision, and values.*

**TJAG's Intent:** The Special Victims' Counsel Course will train judge advocates and paralegals in providing full spectrum legal services and advocacy to victims of rape, sexual assault and other sex crimes

**Mission:** To prepare newly assigned Special Victims' Counsel and Special Victims' Paralegals to meet the challenges of transition from an Air Force legal office serving the needs of command to an independent office serving the needs of individuals who have been victims of sexual assault and other sex crimes.

**Vision:** Practical instruction in the fundamentals of Special Victims' Counsel duties, tailored to the attorney and paralegal who is already experienced in legal work on behalf of command, and emphasizing experiential methods, effective communication, problem solving, and critical thinking.

**Values:** Fostering Air Force Core Values, expertise in military justice, client service and loyalty to crime victims, efficiency, maturity, dependability, good judgment, moral courage, and ethical conduct.

## C. Instructional Areas and Strategic Learning Objectives

**Instructions:** Determine the broad subject areas (blocks) to be covered by the course. Determine the overall learning objectives for each block, setting out the cognitive level of learning. Include affective objectives, if appropriate. Consider these carefully, as they will your guide in planning the individual lessons within each block. See AFM 36-2236, Guidebook for Air Force Instructors, and consult the Academics Division.

### 1. Block I: Course Introduction, Administration, and Graduation (series 100)

#### Block objectives:

Comprehend the mission and learning objectives for the Special Victims' Counsel Course (SVCC).

Know the administrative, logistical, and academic requirements for students attending SVCC.

Characterize attentive, active, and constructive participation in SVCC as important to successful service as a Special Victims' Counsel.

### 2. Block II: Professional Legal Knowledge for Special Victims' Counsel (series 200)

#### Block objectives:

Comprehend principles of military criminal law, evidence, and procedure of special interest to crime victims.

Comprehend new developments in the law relating to the representation of crime victims in a military setting.

Comprehend principles of civil law of special interest to crime victims, including information law, victim assistance programs, legal assistance and adverse administrative actions against offenders.

Comprehend special legal considerations involved in representing a child victim of sexual assault or similar crime.

Apply principles of law, evidence, and procedure to issues raised by factual scenarios.

Value a thorough understanding of applicable law, evidence, and procedure as essential to successful service as Special Victims' Counsel.

### 3. Block III: Legal Skill Sets for Special Victims' Counsel (series 300)

#### Block objectives:

Comprehend techniques for effective communication and positive relations with clients, to include children, who are victims of sexual assault or other sex crimes.

Apply effective communication techniques in factual scenarios.

Comprehend how victims of sexual assault or sex crimes respond to the investigative and court-martial process.

Value effective communication and positive relationships with crime victim clients as essential to successful service as Special Victims' Counsel.

#### 4. **Block IV: Professional Situational Awareness for Special Victims' Counsel (series 400)**

Block objectives:

Comprehend JAG Corps leaders' and military judges' perspectives on the role of Special Victims' Counsel in the fair and efficient administration of military justice.

Comprehend the chain of command for Special Victims' Counsel.

Comprehend the scope of representation for Special Victims' Counsel, including permissible and impermissible activities on behalf of crime victim clients.

Comprehend the roles of other Air Force offices and programs that provide assistance to victims of sexual assault and other crimes.

Know the various local, state and non-governmental agencies available to assist victims of sexual assault or other crimes.

Comprehend the roles of other Air Force offices that are typically involved in responding to allegations of sex crimes.

Respond to assignment as a Special Victims' Counsel as requiring change in the judge advocate's relationships with others in the base community.

Value zealous and ethical advocacy on behalf of crime victims as consistent with the rules of professional responsibility, Air Force Core Values and supportive of the Air Force mission.

#### 5. **Block V: Ethics (Series 500)**

Block objectives:

Comprehend ethical issues of special interest to judge advocates serving as Special Victims' Counsel.

Apply ethical principles learned to issues raised by factual scenarios.

Value a thorough understanding of ethics as essential to successful service as Special Victims' Counsel.

### ***D. Methods of Instruction, Faculty, and Evaluation/Assessment***

**Instructions:** Describe who will teach the course, how they will teach it, and how student performance will be evaluated. If there is no evaluation, so state. See AFM 36-2236, Guidebook for Air Force Instructors, for information and guidance on selection of teaching methods. Also state any other methods used to assess instructional effectiveness for the course as a whole (e.g., end-of-course critiques, pre- and post-course student self-assessments, diagnostic testing, and graduate assessments of alumni and their supervisors. Consult the Academics Division as needed.

JAG School resident faculty, adjunct faculty from cognizant JAG Corps activities, and guest speakers provide instruction.

Methods of instruction will be informal lectures, panel discussions, guided discussions, and experiential exercises. Informal lectures and panel discussions will be during plenary sessions. Guided discussions and experiential exercises will occur in small group seminars facilitated by resident or adjunct faculty. Guided discussions and experiential exercises will provide opportunities for application of information provided in prior informal lectures, requiring participants to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

There are no academic requirements for SVCC graduation. Accordingly, participant performance is not formally evaluated, although seminar facilitators will provide contemporaneous feedback on performance during guided discussions and experiential exercises. Attendees are expected to participate attentively, actively, and constructively.

Assessment of instructional effectiveness will be by examination of participants at the start of the course followed by examination during exercises and at the close of the course, an end-of-course participant critique, and alumni surveys approximately six months following graduation.

## ***E. JAG Corps Major Knowledge Areas***

***Instructions:*** This section contains descriptions of the JAGC Corps Major Knowledge Areas identified by TJAG. It remains the same for each Master Curriculum Plan and serves as a reference for completing Sec. F.

**Professional Legal Knowledge.** Knowledge of the law and processes involved in JAG Corps fields of practice.

**Legal Skill Sets.** Knowledge of the lawyering skills that attorneys and paralegals must maintain or be able to support (e.g., advocacy, client services, discovery management, interviewing, investigating, legal and factual research, legal writing, and litigation).

**Universal Skills.** Skills required by all who (1) lead and work with people and (2) manage and use resources. These skills include communications, information technology, interpersonal skills, leadership, mentoring, office management, and personnel development.

**Professional Situational Awareness.** Knowledge that provides context on national security issues and on JAG Corps, unit, command, and Air Force history, missions, organizational structures, and perspectives.

## ***F. Lesson Fields***

***Instructions:*** Summarize the subjects addressed in the course and tie them to the appropriate JAG Corps Major Knowledge Areas described in Sec. E, above.

### **Professional Legal Knowledge Fields**

Military Criminal Law

Court-martial Procedure

Nonjudicial Punishment

Evidence

Ethics and Professional Responsibility

Adverse Administrative Actions

Investigations

Information Law

Victim Assistance Programs

### **Legal Skill Set Fields**

Civility in Practice

Client Relations and Communication, especially with sexual assault victims

Suicide Prevention

### **Professional Situational Awareness Fields**

JAG Corps Leadership Perspectives

Command Perspectives

Military Judges' Perspectives

Victim Advocate and Sexual Assault Awareness Program Perspectives

## ***G. Student Selection***

The Judge Advocate General selects Air Force judge advocates and paralegals who will engage in advising adult and child victims of sexual assault and similar crimes. More specifically, for the Air Force, HQ USAF/JAX conducts student selection based on who is identified to be an SVC or SVP. For each of the other military services, student selection is made by their respective judge advocate generals.