



National Science Foundation
Office of the Director

April 5, 2023

Dear USAP Community,

April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. I want to take a moment to emphasize the importance of raising awareness of this critical issue. Sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct can create toxic work environments, harm individuals' physical and mental health, and limit opportunities to advance science. NSF is committed to creating safe and inclusive research environments where everyone can thrive. Raising awareness and promoting prevention efforts can help survivors heal and establish safer environments where research can flourish.

As a part of NSF's commitment to safe and inclusive environments, NSF established the Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response (SAHPR) Office within the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR). The SAHPR Office, in partnership with the Office of Polar Programs (OPP), has engaged with U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP) participants on matters relating to sexual assault and sexual harassment, including exploring how to best support victims and survivors of sexual violence. The SAHPR Office is working to remove barriers by providing an independent line for reporting sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct. I am proud to announce the launch of the NSF Antarctic Helpline to supplement on-ice support resources in the USAP.

The NSF Antarctic Helpline is a crisis support service exclusively for members of the USAP community who experience sexual assault or sexual harassment. The helpline provides immediate crisis intervention and emotional support to survivors of sexual assault or sexual harassment via phone, text (SMS), or online chat.

NSF Antarctic Helpline

Phone: 833-673-1733

Text: 202-932-7569

Website and Online Chat: NSFAntarcticHelpline.org

Helpline support specialists provide live, confidential, one-on-one crisis intervention, emotional support, and information about reporting and support resources, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These services are anonymous, secure, and available to USAP community members on and off the ice, providing help anytime, anywhere. The NSF Antarctic Helpline will help ensure deployed USAP personnel have multiple avenues for support and assistance. More information about the helpline is available here, <http://NSFAntarcticHelpline.org>.

While I recognize there is still work to be done, I remain committed to working with the USAP community to take the steps necessary to create a supportive culture, increase safety for all community members and eliminate sexual assault and harassment at our Antarctic stations, vessels, and field camps.

To report a sexual assault or incident of sexual harassment, email: saferscience@nsf.gov.
If in doubt, reach out. And do not be afraid to speak up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sethuraman Panchanathan". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "S" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director