

Highlights of GAO-26-107524, a report to congressional addressees.

Why This Matters

The Department of Defense (DOD) has emphasized the importance of protecting students in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) from instructor sexual misconduct. DOD reported more than 100 misconduct allegations from 2013—2023. Legislation established new JROTC requirements in fiscal year 2024, in part to address concerns about sexual misconduct involving instructors and students.

GAO Key Takeaways

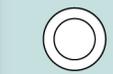
The military services partner with high schools to provide leadership training to students through JROTC, which DOD oversees.

In response to statutory requirements, DOD developed policies and procedures to prevent sexual misconduct in JROTC and respond to misconduct allegations. We identified issues that, if addressed, would aid DOD's efforts:

- The standardized memorandum of agreement (MOA)—which the military services sign with school districts—incorporates seven of 10 required provisions but does not fully incorporate three (see figure). For example, the MOA does not require schools to certify that they provide student training.
- Instructor training does not consistently address Title IX, a law prohibiting sex-based discrimination in education. This makes instructors less likely to be aware of Title IX requirements.
- Information provided to students on how to report misconduct is unclear and could be improved.

Gaps in DOD's oversight of JROTC programs also exist. For example, DOD guidance does not clearly define how the military services' regional officials are expected to coordinate and communicate with partner schools. Clarifying these responsibilities would improve program oversight and better ensure students' safety.

Areas of Misalignment Between Requirements and the Military Services' Agreement with School Districts

	Requirements for standardized Memorandum of Agreement	Alignment with requirements
 Misconduct notification	Schools notify the military services within 48 hours of any allegation of instructor misconduct.	 Partially aligned
 Instructor certification	Military services conduct instructor oversight, including expiring instructor certifications after not more than 5 years.	 Partially aligned
 Student training	Schools implement student training related to sexual misconduct.	 Not aligned

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information and statute. | GAO-26-107524

Note: For more details, see figure 2 in GAO-26-107524.

How GAO Did This Study

We analyzed relevant statutes, documents, and policies on DOD's prevention of and response to sexual misconduct in JROTC; reviewed the most recent 5 years of data on allegations; visited 11 high schools with JROTC programs in four states; and interviewed school officials, instructors, and DOD officials.

What GAO Recommends

We are making 16 recommendations, including for DOD to include all requirements in the MOA; standardize instructor Title IX training; better communicate information about reporting misconduct; and clarify oversight responsibilities. DOD did not provide comments on the report.

For more information, contact: Kristy E. Williams at williamsk@gao.gov.