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# Dragon Legal Digest

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## Law & Order: SVC

By TSgt Meshanda Lopez, Special Victims' Paralegal

"In the military justice system, sexually based offenses are considered especially heinous. At Keesler Air Force Base, the dedicated legal professionals who lead victims through sexual assault crises are members of an elite squad known as the Special Victims' Counsel. These are their stories."

Now read that again, but with the intro to *Law and Order: SVU* in mind. Similar to the actors on the TV series, we, the Keesler Special Victims' Counsel Attorney and Paralegal, work together in representing victims of sexual assault, sexual misconduct, stalking, and other similar crimes. Our main goal is to strengthen the support of victims of sexual assault and enhance their rights within our military justice system.

Prior to the creation of the SVC Program in 2013, victims of sexual assault often felt as though they were alone in the process because their wishes did not always fall in line with the government, whose role is to prosecute the alleged offender. As a result of this misaligned representation, victims were sometimes left to "deal" with the decision of the prosecutors, e.g. trying the offense in a court-martial and urging the victim to testify, even if testifying was one of the victim's biggest fears, rather than be reassured that they actually had a voice in the process.

Coupled with Congress' request to create separate representation for victims of sexual assault in the military and the need to protect our Airmen, the Air Force became the first military branch to create such a program where victims would be appointed a dedicated attorney and paralegal, free of charge, who would: listen to their concerns; zealously represent them; advocate on

their behalf; and be their voice in the process. For Keesler clients, their voice comes in the form of an exuberant attorney from Ohio and a charismatic paralegal from Alabama.

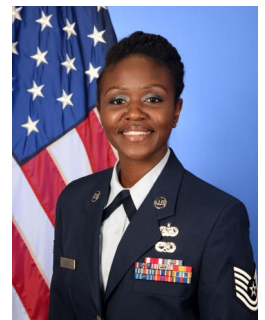
While victims of sexual assault will be informed of SVC services when they make a restricted or unrestricted report to the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator or when they report the allegation to the Office of Special Investigations, there is no reason why the Special Victims' Counsel Office cannot be a victim's first stop to seek representation prior to beginning this potentially long and convoluted journey. Allow us to bring clarity and assist you with making informed decisions during the difficult road ahead.

If you or someone you know is ever a victim of sexual assault, remember that we are here to make sure you are safe, ensure you understand the options available to you, and educate you during each step of the process moving forward. Every Airman has rights—let us protect yours.

If you would like the Special Victims' Counsel to brief your private organization, unit or squadron, please contact us to get that scheduled.



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## Copying Military ID Cards

### The General Rule:

It is against federal law to make a copy of a Military ID card. Title 18 of the United States Code, Section 701, says anyone who “photographs, prints, or in any other manner makes or executes any engraving, photograph, print, or impression in the likeness of” a Military ID “except as authorized under regulations made pursuant to law” is subject to six months in prison and/or a fine.

### The Exception:

Air Force Instruction 36-3026\_IP, *Identification Cards for Members of the Uniformed Services, Their Eligible Family Members, and Other Eligible Personnel*, 17 June 2009, provides the sole authorized exception. Paragraph 1.8.1.1. spells out that a “cardholder may allow photocopying of their ID card **to facilitate DoD benefits**. Photocopying is prohibited in all other instances; furthermore, the photocopy shall not be used as a substitute for an ID card.”

It is important to distinguish between actual DoD benefits—such as Tricare benefits—and benefits from a third party that you may receive by being associated with the DoD—such as a military discount. You should never allow anyone to copy your ID card unless it is for the purpose of facilitating DoD benefits.

### The Alternative:

When asked to prove you are in the military, one alternative to allowing someone to copy your ID card is to print the Proof of Service Letter off of Virtual MPF. This letter can be accessed under the Self Service Actions option on the left hand side of the home page, then select Personal Data option, and then click “Proof of Service Letter,” which basically provides a document to offer outside agencies to explain that the member is in fact serving in the Air Force.

## Immigration Agent Coming to Keesler

A representative from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services will be at the Legal Office on Friday, 19 May to answer questions and provide specific guidance for Airmen and their dependents. Call 591-8601 for more info or to make an appointment.

## CONTACT US



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For will worksheets or Powers of Attorney please visit our website below.

[https://  
aflegalassistance.law.af.mil](https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil)

### Wills Appointments

**By Appointment Only**  
**Tues (0900-1000)**  
**Thurs (1400-1500)**

### Legal Assistance

**By Appointment Only**  
**Mon (1330-1530)**  
**Wed (0900-1100)**

### Powers of Attorney & Notaries

**WALK-INS**  
**Mon-Fri (0800-1630)**