

Gov. Evers: Announces sweeping reforms within Wisconsin National Guard

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced sweeping reforms within the Wisconsin National Guard, to include a change in leadership, in response to a federal review which detailed systemic failures by the Wisconsin National Guard in its handling of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and retaliation allegations.

On March 14, 2019, Gov. Evers, along with U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, requested the federal National Guard Bureau Office of Complex Investigations (OCI) conduct an independent and comprehensive review of the Wisconsin National Guard's handling of allegations of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Over the course of six months, OCI conducted a thorough investigation that included canvassing approximately 1,600 Wisconsin National Guard personnel, conducting 78 in-depth interviews, reviewing over 1,100 documents, and conducting 10 site visits to military installations throughout the state.

OCI recently finalized its report of the assessment. The report comprehensively documents where the Wisconsin National Guard's policies and practices fail to hold perpetrators accountable and leave survivors unsupported. The report also provides 21 recommendations on how to correct these failings.

"I am extremely upset and concerned with the National Guard Bureau Office of Complex Investigations' findings, especially with how the Wisconsin National Guard investigates sexual assault allegations," said Gov. Evers. "Our service members deserve to be safe and supported while carrying out their important mission, which is why I have ordered the Wisconsin National Guard to implement top-to-bottom

changes to ensure a safe workplace in the Guard, one that is free of sexual assault and harassment and the fear they might face retaliation for reporting sexual assault or harassment when it happens.”

“New leadership is also needed to successfully implement these reforms,” Gov. Evers continued. “Earlier today I asked for and accepted Adjutant General Dunbar’s resignation, effective December 31, 2019. This will ensure an orderly transition and minimize disruption for our guardsmen and airmen.”

The process to select a new adjutant general will begin in the coming weeks. Brigadier General Gary L. Ebben will serve as interim adjutant general pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 321.10(2), which states that “the senior ranking deputy adjutant general for army, air, or civil authority support shall have all the powers and duties of the adjutant general.”

In addition to a change in leadership, other drastic changes are needed to correct this situation.

Gov. Evers today signed Executive Order #62 to direct the Wisconsin National Guard to promptly and fully correct the 22 findings OCI identified in its report and faithfully implement OCI’s 21 recommendations.

[Executive Order #62](#) does the following:

- Requires that the Wisconsin National Guard submit, within 60 days of the date of this order, a corrective action plan for approval by the Governor. The corrective action plan shall detail how the Wisconsin National Guard will implement each of the 21 recommendations in the National Guard Bureau’s Office of Complex Investigations’ Report and identify strategies to prevent sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other sexual misconduct, including best practices from other states’ national guards.
- Requires that a general officer appointed by the National Guard Bureau and approved by the Governor shall oversee the implementation of the corrective action plan. The appointed general officer shall report monthly to the Governor regarding progress towards implementing each of the Report’s recommendations. Implementation of the corrective action plan shall be completed by September 1, 2020.
- Requires that, beginning September 1, 2020, the Wisconsin National Guard undergo review by the National Guard Bureau to re-assess sexual assault and

sexual harassment reporting procedures, investigation protocols, and accountability measures, and evaluate the implementation of each of the Report's recommendations.

- Establishes an office of ombudsman that shall assist survivors and complainants in the review of allegations of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and retaliation within the Wisconsin National Guard. The office of ombudsman shall provide quarterly reports to the Governor on such matters. Executive Order #62 also requires the Wisconsin National Guard to fully accommodate the ombudsman, including providing full access to personnel and records deemed necessary by the office of ombudsman, in accordance with law and policy.

Gov. Evers believes that this report belongs to the public and has chosen to release these findings. However, if you are a survivor of sexual harassment or sexual assault, reading the report may be retraumatizing.

Access the report [here](#) and appendices to the report [here](#).

Due to concerns about safety and retaliation, the report contains redactions made by the National Guard Bureau to protect the identity of survivors, whistleblowers, and other Guard personnel.

Please know that there are many resources available to assist you:

- You can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline (1-800-656-4673). The hotline is operated by RAINN in partnership with more than 1,000 sexual assault service providers throughout the country, including Wisconsin.
- The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault provides a detailed listing of sexual assault service providers throughout Wisconsin. You can locate the listing here: <https://wcasa.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/resources/SASP+-Map+%26+Contacts.pdf>

Reporting new misconduct:

- If you believe criminal misconduct has occurred, contact local law enforcement.
- You can also email the Governor's Office about the matter. The email address is NationalGuardAssessment@wisconsin.gov.

Reporting retaliation

- If you are being retaliated against by the Wisconsin National Guard, you can file a complaint with the Department of Defense's Inspector General by calling 1-800-424-9098 or sending an email to hotline@dodig.osd.mil