

Service 
Women's 
Action 
Network 



2022
ANNUAL
REPORT



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.	2
SWAN Leadership.	3
SWAN Mission and Goals	4
SWAN 2022: By the Numbers	5
Legislation and Advocacy	6
Connect.	10
Support	11
Thank You to Our Supporters.	12

INTRODUCTION

Service Women's Action Network is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2007 as the only organization that advocates for and supports the needs of both service women and women veterans, regardless of rank, military branch, or years of experience. With over 40,000 nonprofits in America working to serve the needs of veterans and military personnel, this is an important distinction. While women service members and veterans have benefited from many support programs, the majority of them are still designed, by default, to meet the needs of men. We're making sure that changes. SWAN differs heavily from most veteran organizations because it focuses on the financial, legal, housing and mental health needs of women. It caters to the highly sensitive interaction needed to assist women during their time of need. It is more than a discussion, an email, and a phone call to these women. Our resources save their lives and give them hope in moments when they have no one left to call.

History

In 2007, a group of women veterans who were having trouble getting their Veteran Affairs (VA) claims approved decided to organize and do something about the VA claims process. Initially working under another organization, in 2009 they broke away and formed the Service Women's Action Network, establishing SWAN as a 501c3 in New York City.

They quickly found that many of the problems that women veterans face stemmed from harassment and assault that they experienced while serving. At the time, the Veterans Administration (VA) did not recognize sexual assault as a source of post-traumatic stress (PTS) in the way it recognized combat stress. SWAN worked to support victims of military sexual assault, to hold perpetrators accountable in the military justice system, and to have the PTS that results from a sexual assault recognized by the VA. Despite orchestrating many institutional improvements, including having sexual assault recognized as a source of post-traumatic stress by the VA, SWAN continues to work on these issues today and provides direct assistance to women facing challenges related to mental health, sexual assault, VA claims and more.

In 2012, SWAN began advocating for equality within military assignments after researching the DOD's exclusion of women from more than a quarter of a million prestigious ground combat jobs. SWAN believed that excluding women from key positions contributed to a military culture that devalued women, prevented advancement opportunities and created a culture that caused service women to be more vulnerable to harassment and assault. Due to dedicated legislators, military officials and SWAN's consistent efforts on Capitol Hill, the policy preventing women

from entering combat positions was eliminated in 2013. In 2016, the military services began integrating women into previously closed occupations and units.

Today, SWAN continues to press for law and policy changes to better address the needs of service women and women veterans. Our organization also provides direct services in the form of workshops, case management assistance, and speaker services for leadership conferences around the country. In 2015, the organization moved to Washington, DC where it is better positioned to engage with law and policy makers. With a focus on research, advocacy and direct support, SWAN is the leading national organization focused on supporting service women and women veterans.

SWAN LEADERSHIP



Dr. Deshauna Barber is a former Miss USA, women's rights advocate, award-winning international speaker, coach, and entrepreneur with a bold approach to inspiring and encouraging her audience. Deshauna uses her experience as an Army veteran, Nonprofit CEO, former Miss USA, and STEM graduate to inspire her audience. Deshauna shows the power of perseverance and tenacity to now become a top-rated speaker that is widely sought after by Fortune 500 companies. She currently works full time as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Service Women's Action Network, the nation's leading 501c3 nonprofit organization advocating on behalf of all servicewomen and women veterans in the country.

Dr. Barber has a Diversity and Inclusion Certification from Cornell University. She also has a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Norwich University, a Master of Science degree in Computer Information Systems from the University of Maryland University College, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from Virginia State University.

As Miss USA, she spent her year-long reign advocating for our men and women in uniform by encouraging our government to provide additional support for soldiers who have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The 32-year-old uses her platform to encourage us to pay close attention to the mental health of our service members after deployments and their service to our country.

Dr. Barber served her country for over 11 years and when she is not advocating for veterans, she travels the world as a full-time Motivational Speaker. She has made it her life goal to encourage, inspire and strengthen the people around her.

Deshauna has appeared on *The Steve Harvey Show*, *The Rachael Ray Show*, *Fox*, and *Friends*, *The Chelsea Show*, *Good Morning Washington*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *The T.D. Jakes Show*, *The Nightly Show*, *The Source on Sirius XM*, *The Daily Show*, *Lunch Break*, *Live with Kelly*, *Good Morning America* and in *Glamour Magazine* and *Diversity Magazine*.

MISSION AND GOALS

Service Women's Action Network

SWAN's Mission: The mission of the Service Women's Action Network is to support, connect and advocate for service women-past, present and future.

In 2022, our work centered on four major goals, derived from the three focus areas outlined in our mission as well as our commitment to developing a well-sustained organization in order to maximize our impact.

Advocate: Advocate for the rights of service women and women veterans in order to create lasting, institutional change to create just military and veteran systems.

Connect: Connect service women, women veterans, and organizations focused on supporting military women to each other, creating a national network of military women.

Support: Directly support service women, women veterans, and their families by connecting them to direct services, information, and opportunities to support personal and professional goals.

Develop: Maintaining organizational sustainability, transparency, and growth so that SWAN can continue its mission, increase its impact, and promote more equal and just military and veteran systems.

Barksdale Women Fly for Women's History Month by SrA Lillian Miller





SWAN 2022: BY THE NUMBERS

Today, there are **more than a quarter of a million women** in uniform and **over 2 million women veterans**; the highest number in history.

**SWAN Members:
9,666**

New Community Partners: 10+

New community partners in 2022 included corporate and small business partners, as well as charitable organizations. These include Maxfield Family Foundation, Cigna Foundation, Saprea Foundation, Proctor & Gamble, and Navy Federal Credit Union.

Case Management:

124 service members and veterans were referred to direct service providers

17,000+ people accessed the website over 30,000 times

50 new resources added to the Resource Portal

LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Renewal of DACOWITS

DACOWITS, in 2021, was part of a review of all Defense Advisory Committees which resulted in many being permanently retired. SWAN sent the SECDEF a letter making the case for retaining DACOWITS and urging him to renew the DACOWITS charter. We followed up that letter by raising the matter at two small by-invitation-only meetings. In March 2022, SECDEF announced he was renewing the DACOWITS charter. SWAN has attended the meetings in 2022. SWAN will continue to attend meetings and bring to the attention of other VSOs/MSOs, DoD, the VA, and the Congress where further assistance to military women is needed.

Speaker Pelosi's Round Table

SWAN was again invited to participate in Speaker Pelosi's annual Veterans Round Table. This year, SWAN raised the question of the IVF limitations with the Speaker during the discussion. We learned that she supports the changes SWAN is advocating. SWAN looks forward to being invited to such forums in the new Congress to directly influence legislation.



LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

One of the ways that SWAN enacts change for military women is through legislative efforts.

Part of our legislative efforts include crafting language for legislation and communicating and educating congressional offices and staff members as experts. While SWAN publishes new legislative priorities each year, the legislation we track is constantly evolving as it moves through the lawmaking process.

Congressional Testimony

For the first time, SWAN was invited to provide testimony at the annual Joint Hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees. SWAN's witness testified in favor of the following: 1.) Passage of the PACT Act; 2.) Increased research on the effect of toxic exposures on women veterans; 3.) Better Congressional oversight and resourcing aimed at eliminating sexual assault and harassment of women veterans using VA health care and other VA services; 4.) Removal of limitations on those eligible for treatment of service-connected infertility requiring IVF (currently only those in heterosexual marriages and able to produce their own gametes are eligible); and, 5.) Elimination of co-pays for veterans prescribed contraceptives. Congress considered legislation on all these matters for passage in 2022 (e.g. the PACT Act passed). Some will be pushed into the 118th Congress. SWAN will continue its advocacy. In addition, SWAN continues to be a resource for Congresspersons and staffers to advocate for support to military women and minorities and veterans.

Prevention of Military Sexual Assault and Harassment

SWAN continues to work closely with Congress and the Office of the Secretary of Defense on this long-standing problem. SWAN was one of only five MSO/VSO organizations invited to a series of small meetings with the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in 2021 and 2022 to discuss the progress made on instituting and resourcing the recommendations made by the 2021 Independent Review Commission Report. We also continued our advocacy with Congress and are happy to report that additional changes to the UCMJ contained in the NDAA 2023 will further narrow the accused's commander's role in legal proceedings under the UCMJ (proven to be biased in many cases). This year's legislation removes other authorities from the defendant's commander including decisions on grants of immunity, the hiring of expert witnesses, the taking of depositions, and the selection of court martial panels (they will now be chosen randomly, whenever possible). These changes are the result of a decade's work by SWAN and Congress. SWAN will continue to monitor their implementation and advocate for additional DoD and VA policy changes and legislation to reduce and eliminate sexual assault and harassment.



LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY CONTINUED

Abortion Services

SWAN is a long-time member of the Military Working Group of the Reproductive Rights Coalition. In June, after the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, SWAN engaged with the other Coalition members to educate them on the impacts the decision would have on veterans and military members living or serving in States with limited or no access to abortion. Working with the Coalition, we prepared letters to Congress and to the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs urging them to provide abortions in cases of rape, incest, and the life or health of the mother for all beneficiaries of TRICARE and of Veterans Healthcare Services since these fall under Federal, not state, laws. These letters also urged that the both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs reimburse travel expenses for beneficiaries who must travel to another state to obtain an abortion. A VA Interim Federal Rule and a Secretary of Defense Memorandum and Federal Regulations have been issued effecting these requested changes within 2022. SWAN will continue to advocate for these measures as opponents try to bring legal challenges and initiate legislation to change them.

Elimination of Copays for Contraception

Despite the provisions of the American Care Act that insurers provide contraception without copays to their beneficiaries, many users of TRICARE and Veterans Healthcare Services are charged copays. SWAN worked with the HVAC, SVAC, HASC, and SASC to eliminate these copays. These measures passed the House of Representatives but were not included in NDAA 2023. The Veterans' version of legislation still awaits final voting. SWAN will continue working on this issue with the 118th Congress, as necessary.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Treatment

Most IVF treatment is not covered under either TRICARE or Veterans Administration Healthcare. Only those whose infertility is service-connected are eligible for such care but only if they are in a heterosexual marriage and both partners are able to produce the own gametes. SWAN worked closely with Congress and a number of groups to 1.) Make covered IVF treatment available to all service-connected beneficiaries and 2.) To open that care to those beneficiaries whose infertility is not service connected. These efforts will be carried over into the 118th Congress.

SWAN also made an impact by engaging with many media outlets over the past year to educate members of Congress, the leaders of the current administration and the public on these important issues. The CEO, staff, and Board members have been interviewed on such topics as the VA Interim Federal Rule on abortion counseling and care; the DoD memorandum on abortion care leave, and protection; and, Arlington National Cemetery trying to deal with space issues (new draft policies could prevent many veterans from requesting burial with full military honors which would disproportionately affect women and minorities). In addition, SWAN was asked for interviews on USMC gender segregation in recruit training, the Special Trial Counsel legislation, the DoD report on sexual assault in the military which called for further efforts, child abuse in the military, court cases on sexual assault victims being able to hold perpetrators to account in civil court, and women veterans suffering from PTSD from combat, MST, and other causes. Finally, SWAN responded to some conservatives' attacks on women's expanding military roles and their increasing importance to our national security.

LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY CONTINUED

Public Relations/Media

SWAN constantly highlights the contributions of military women in the media, shines light on issues affecting service women and women veterans and provides expertise on women in the military. We collaborate with major news outlets like *The Hill*, *Politico*, *National Public Radio*, *Sirius XM*, and more. In 2022, SWAN issued 21 Press Releases:



- **January 11, 2022**
Job Announcement
*Director of Government Relations Assistant
Position Open to Applicants*
- **January 11, 2022**
Correction Volunteer Position Announcement
*Director of Government Relations Assistant
Volunteer Position Open to Applicants*
- **March 2, 2022**
**SWAN Partners with Navy Federal Credit Union
for Women's Month**
- **March 10, 2022**
**SWAN's Director of Government Relations,
Lory Manning Testifies On The Hill**
- **March 18, 2022**
SWAN Action Group Kick-Off Virtual Meet and Greet
- **March 30, 2022**
Job Opening Announcement
*Director of Government Relations Assistant
Position Open to Applicants*
- **April 28, 2022**
**SWAN CEO To Speak at Procter and Gamble
for Military Appreciation Month**
- **May 26, 2022**
In These Difficult Times
*SWAN is sending our deepest thoughts
and prayers to the citizens of this nation*
- **May 30, 2022**
In Honor of Memorial Day
*We honor our fallen service members who
sacrificed so much in defense of our country*
- **June 12, 2022**
Women Veterans Appreciation Day
*Seventy-Fourth Anniversary of the passage of the
Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948
(PL-625)*
- **June 24, 2022**
Supreme Court Overturns *Roe v. Wade*
- **August 2, 2022**
PACT Act Passes Senate
- **September 2, 2022**
**DOD Releases 2021 Active-Duty Sexual Assault
Annual Report**
- **September 7, 2022**
**Veteran Affairs Abortion Submits an
Interim Final Rule (IFR)**
- **November 1, 2022**
Second Annual Virtual 5k Run/Walk
*Join Our 2nd Annual 5k Run/Walk to Honor of
National Veterans and Military Families Month*
- **November 7, 2022**
Exercise Your Right to Vote
Midterm Elections November 8th
- **November 11, 2022**
Happy Veterans Day
Celebrate Veterans Day with SWAN
- **November 29, 2022**
Giving Tuesday
*Join SWAN to Improve the Lives of Female
Service Members and Women Veterans*
- **November 30, 2022**
Cigna Foundation Grant Award
*Service Women's Action Network Awarded
\$100,000 Grant from Cigna Foundation*
- **December 5, 2022**
**Service Women's Action Network
Launches New App**
*SWAN's new For Service Women App is now
available on IOS and Android*
- **December 23, 2022**
**President Signed National Defense
Authorization Act of 2023 Into Law**
*Several provisions introduce changes to the
military justice system*

CONNECT

Navy Federal Credit Union Partnership

SWAN partnered with Navy Federal Credit Union for Women's History Month. SWAN CEO Deshauna Barber spoke at NFCU's Women's History Month celebration to discuss the importance of empowering women service members and veterans through offering financial literacy programs, investment in women's business ventures, and the usage of community resources. Deshauna will share her inspiring journey of becoming the first soldier to win Miss USA and how her 11-year career in the Army reserve has helped her become a better CEO for Service Women's Action Network.



SWAN Action Group

The SWAN Action Group was launched in early 2022 to organize eager volunteers to come together to support SWAN's mission. One of their main calls to action in 2022 was contacting members of Congress to show support for the PACT Act, which ultimately passed. By the end of 2022, the group has over 80 members.

Military Women's Coalition

The Military Women's Coalition is a national group of formal and informal organizations that work collaboratively to serve and support active duty, reserve, guard, veteran and retired service women by uniting and elevating their voices to influence policy and improve their well being. In 2018, SWAN researched and led the creation of the Military Women's Coalition. SWAN identified over 150 small, mostly unfunded organizations across the country that were serving military women at the local and state levels. In 2020, we worked diligently to establish the Military Women's Coalition as an impactful and valuable Coalition for both member organizations and military women across the United States. In June 2019,

SWAN hosted the first annual MWC Steering Committee meeting in Washington, DC. Through the establishment of the steering committee, the MWC has been able to focus its mission, create organizational bylaws and governing practices, establish avenues of funding for the MWC, and more. Though the MWC is a new organization, members have already seen the benefits of coalition membership in the ways of fundraising, resource allocation, connecting service women to relevant coalition organizations to assist them with the challenges they face and more. In 2019, SWAN played a major role not only in the Steering Committee and by the establishment of a basic organizational structure for the MWC but by planning, organizing, and hosting this conference.

MILITARY WOMEN'S COALITION

UNITING SERVICEWOMEN:
PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

SWAN 2022 SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Facebook:
17,000+ followers, 203 posts

Instagram:
3,800+ followers, 158 posts

Twitter:
8,200+ followers, 100 posts

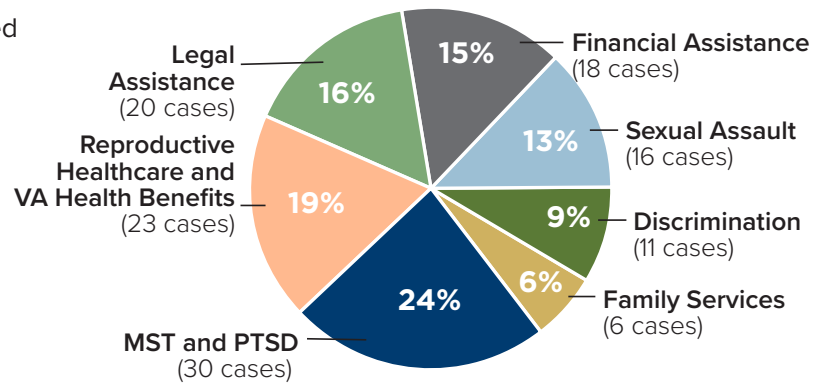
LinkedIn:
1,000+ followers, 42 posts

SUPPORT



Case Management

In 2022, SWAN continued to support service members and veterans with our case management program, with a member of staff solely dedicated to responding to support requests from women veterans and service women and identifying gender specific resources in communities all over the United States. SWAN responded to requests from veterans and service members related to a wide variety of issues in 2022 ▶



Resource Portal

Since its creation in 2018, our Resource Portal is continuously expanding. In 2022, the SWAN Resource Portal grew to include more than 325 gender-specific resources and was accessed over 1,790 times. The Portal includes resources related to gender equality, housing, financial assistance, alternative therapies, mental health, and more.



For Service Women App

Service Women’s Action Network (SWAN) launched its long-awaited “For Service Women” app in December 2022. The For Service Women app gives military women who may be facing hardship access to support, self-care tools, and information to help manage the short- and long-term effects they may experience during and after their service. The new app offers servicewomen and women veterans resources, tips, and a safe environment to connect and build community.

The community chat rooms feature a powerful tool included in the application to encourage members to share their stories, advice, and journeys in a safe environment surrounded by support. It also includes a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week hotline to request assistance, funded by a generous grant from Cigna Foundation.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

In order to work towards our mission for service women and women veterans, we depend entirely on the generosity of our members, community partners, and charitable foundations. In 2022, with the help of our supporters, SWAN has:

- Fought to ensure equal treatment of women in the military, hold sex offenders accountable in the military justice system, ensure access to full healthcare needs for servicewomen and women veterans, and eliminate barriers to disability claims for women veterans.
- Worked to expand and solidify the Military Women's Coalition, and to expand the efficacy of a national network of organizations and individuals focused on supporting service women and women veterans.
- Launched our For Service Women app, including a 24/7 emergency assistance hotline.
- Fought to ensure service women have access to all jobs, regardless of their gender.

SWAN remains focused and passionate in advancing our mission. In 2023, join us in supporting, connecting and advocating for service women-past, present and future.

To continue your support for service women, women veterans, and the Service Women's Action network, visit our website to become a SWAN member or to make a contribution in solidarity with all military women.

SWAN could not conduct research, educate policy makers, build networks among military women, or connect service women and women veterans to the resources they need without the support of our community.

THANK YOU for supporting the Service Women's Action Network!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:

- Cigna Foundation
- Focus For Health Foundation
- Kaufman Fund
- Maxfield Family Foundation
- MKM Foundation
- Navy Federal Credit Union
- Palmieri Foundation
- Pritzker Military Foundation
- Procter & Gamble
- Stavros Niarchos Foundation



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