



National Science Foundation
Office of Polar Programs

Dear USAP Community,

Thank you to everyone who joined the recent SACHS webinars and shared your concerns. We want you to know we are listening, and we are taking concrete steps to make the U.S. Antarctic Program safer, more respectful, and more supportive for all members of the community. We also promised to get back to you with answers to the questions you posed, and we are providing those updates below.

Renovations to Building 155, including bathroom and shower improvements, are planned once the new lodging facility is complete. In the meantime, we are exploring ways to improve privacy in existing spaces. While cameras remain under consideration, there are no current plans to install them at McMurdo.

We are also enhancing training to focus on prevention, accountability, and community culture, alongside updated policies and revisions to the Polar Code of Conduct. Confidential support remains central to the SAHPR program: advocates do not keep case files, and information is only shared with consent or when legally required. Beginning in the 2025–26 austral winter season, on-ice victim advocate services will be provided by the National Organization of Victim Advocacy (NOVA), ensuring consistent, trauma-informed support with oversight from the NSF SAHPR program.

Finally, contracting practices are under review to ensure the right balance between program needs and community well-being. The next solicitation, available on [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), includes stronger expectations for hiring and vetting to ensure managers are equipped to make careful, qualified staffing decisions.

We are committed to continuing this work with openness and care. Thank you for holding us accountable and for helping us strengthen the USAP community.

Sincerely,
Jean Cottam Allen
Director
Office of Polar Programs