



## NSVRC TIP SHEET

# Going to College: What Families Need to Know About Sexual Assault and Safety on Campus

National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is focused on providing parents, caregivers, and students the tools and resources necessary to create a safe and healthy campus experience. One of the most concerning issues young adults face is sexual assault. In addition to mobilizing campuses and communities to address this issue, it's important for all parents to feel prepared and equipped to raise this topic with their children. NSVRC encourages parents and caregivers to address key topics relating to sexual assault and safety before their child leaves for college. Teaching young adults about this prevalent public health issue will better prepare them to deal with this issue in an informed way. This information is also essential in enabling your child to contribute to a campus culture that promotes safety, respect, and equality.

### KNOW THE FACTS

It can be difficult to think and talk about sexual assault when your son or daughter is going off to college, but it's important that you are both aware of the prevalent and frequent nature of sexual assault on campus.

- One in five women and one in 16 men are sexually assaulted while in college.
- More than 90 percent of sexual assaults go unreported.
- Nearly two-thirds of college students experience sexual harassment.
- Among college women, nine out of 10 victims of rape and sexual assault know their offender.

### 5 KEYS TO A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

It can be encouraging for parents to know that developing and supporting healthy relationships is critical to preventing sexual assault. Talk to your son or daughter about the five keys to healthy relationships — Respect, Learn, Empower, Consent, and Communicate — so they can contribute to a positive campus culture for themselves and their peers.

- Respect: promote and model healthy attitudes and relationships
- Learn: access credible information and resources to promote your overall health
- Empower: everyone has the right to set limits, feel safe, and get support
- Consent: seek mutual agreement without fear or pressure
- Communicate: express yourself to partners, peers, and family

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT CONSENT

Consent is one of the most important elements of any healthy sexual relationship. Sex without consent isn't sex. It's assault. Here's what you can tell your son or daughter about consent:

- Consent is voluntary, mutual, and can be withdrawn at any time.
- Past consent does not mean current or future consent.
- There is no consent when there is force, intimidation, or coercion.
- There is no consent if a person is mentally or physically incapacitated or impaired because one cannot understand the fact, nature, or extent of the sexual situation, including due to alcohol or other drugs.

For more information on consent, [click here](#).

## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

It's no secret that drug use and alcohol consumption are widespread on college campuses across the country. Many studies show a direct relationship between excessive alcohol use, such as binge drinking, and risk for committing sexual assault. Research shows that approximately half of sexual assaults are associated with alcohol use by the perpetrator, victim, or both.

When you talk to your teen about drugs and alcohol, it's crucial to stress that sexual assault is never the victim's fault. It does not matter what the victim is wearing or doing, whether the victim has been drinking, or what type of relationship the victim has with the person who is abusing him or her.

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CHILD'S COLLEGE

It's important to know how your child's school handles sexual assault. In 2014, 40 percent of colleges and universities reported not investigating a single sexual assault in the previous five years. While most colleges still have work to do in creating safe and supportive environments, the good news is that many schools have begun implementing promising policies and programs, and [Title IX](#) is increasingly helping to enforce proper handling of sexual assault.

Below are some questions to pose. Campus Police, Student Affairs, and the Office of Resident Life are all good places to start as you look to get your questions answered.

- Where can I review the policies and procedures used by this institution to respond to a report of sexual assault?
- What sexual assault training is provided to faculty and staff, including resident assistants?
- What counseling or services are available for victims of sexual assault, both on and off campus?
- How can I learn more about what this campus is doing to prevent sexual assault and support victims?

**For more information on this topic, visit [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org).**