It has been difficult to watch or listen to the news without hearing some reference to sexual assault on college campuses. With this national attention, we felt it would be a good idea to discuss what this is all about.

Campus sexual assault is a complicated, multi-dimensional community health issue with no easy or quick solutions. Our behaviors can contribute to the problem or be a part of the solution. Addressing sexual assault as a community health issue broadens the focus of the issue and provides more opportunities to develop the combination of strategies that will create a safe, respectful environment in any community (however that is defined) that does not tolerate, condone, or enable sexual activity without consent. I hope the information you find here will assist you in figuring out how your own behavior can contribute to that type of environment.

Myths, victim-blaming attitudes, retaliation for those reporting sexual assaults, rigid gender stereotypes, lack of understanding of sexual assault and related issues, boundary issues and silence are just some contributions to the prevalence of sexual assaults. These things influence individual attitudes and beliefs who then contribute to community norms and responses. How someone talks about sexual assault, how they respond to people who are involved in them and whether they see themselves as people who can help can all make a difference in addressing the issue.

We don’t really know why sexual assault occurs and best practices for combating this very traumatic, hurtful issue currently don’t exist. We know it is related to power and control and that it is perpetrated by a small percentage of the population who commit this offense multiple times.

Research suggests that students who trust their college system and administrators will be more likely to report and seek help with violence-related concerns. Promising practices tell us that there are actions each of us can take to prevent or stop potential sexual assaults as we witness/hear inappropriate or high risk behaviors or comments [bystander intervention].

There are three primary influences on how campuses are approaching sexual assault. The first is Title IX. [No, it’s not all about sports.]

‘No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

You don’t see sports mentioned but you also don’t see sexual assault. How does campus sexual assault come under Title IX? Both the Department of Education and the U.S. Supreme Court have found that sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination prohibited by Title IX. And, sexual violence is viewed under the law as an extreme form of hostile environment/sexual harassment and must be addressed. When students suffer sexual assault and harassment, they are deprived of equal and free access to an education and that is what Title IX is in place to ensure.

The next influence comes from the Campus SaVE Act. SaVE instructs colleges and universities to provide programming for students and employees addressing the issues of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. These educational programs must include certain subjects:

- A statement by the school that it prohibits acts of sexual violence
- The definition of various acts of sexual violence
- Education on bystander intervention
- Risk reduction programs so
students recognize and can avoid abusive behaviors or potential attacks

- Information on the school's reporting system and disciplinary proceedings.

The third influence is a report from the White House Task Force formed to study and develop recommendations for college campuses. Goals Include:

1. Identifying the Problem: Campus Climate Surveys
2. Preventing Sexual Assault – and Engaging Men
3. Effectively Responding When a Student Is Sexually Assaulted
   - Someone a survivor can talk to in confidence
   - A comprehensive sexual misconduct policy
   - Trauma-informed training for school officials
   - Better school disciplinary systems
   - Partnerships with the community
4. Increasing Transparency and Improving Enforcement

Some Facts

- Most (80-90%) sexual assault victims are assaulted by someone they know.
- Most people tell the truth about sexual assault. Only 2-8% are false reports—same rate as most other felony crimes.
- Sexual assault is an act of violence, sex is the weapon and trauma is the result.
- Most people don’t commit sexual assault, but the few that do, commit multiple sexual assaults as well as other assaults.
- The majority of perpetrators remain undetected in our community—they are not caught.
- Sexual violence affects everyone.
- Sexual violence can happen to anyone, anywhere, and at any time.

Sexual Violence Information

What Can I do?

Bystander Intervention

Contribute to a Positive Culture around Sexual Assault:

- Understand that sexual violence affects us all.
- Speak out against all forms of violence.
- Understand the issues involved in sexual assault.
- Help others understand the issues involved in sexual assault.
- Understand what consent means.
- Speak out against the media’s portrayal of violence.
- Respect and embrace diversity.
- Believe in equality.
- Work towards being sexually healthy.
- Confront others about attitudes and behaviors that treat people as sexual objects and do not treat men and women as equals.
- Always ask for your partner’s consent if you are seeking to engage in a sexual activity.
- Treat others as your equals, with respect and consideration.
- Know that most sex offenders aren’t strangers.
- Be non-judgmental.
- Be strong.
- Think about the jokes you tell, the jokes you laugh at, the stories you find amusing, the music you listen to...do any of them involve denigrating people based on gender or sexuality?
- Confront others who tell jokes, laugh at jokes, tell stories, laugh at stories, listen to music that denigrate or make fun of people in a sexual manner.
- Call for help or intervene if you witness inappropriate sexual behavior.
- Confront harassment of any kind.
- Use alcohol moderately.
- Encourage others to use alcohol moderately.
- Hold off on judgment.
- Be empathetic.

Engage others in discussions about sexual violence.
- Challenge assumptions and stereotypes...
- Empower...
- Advocate...
- Find your voice.... Open your mind.... Open your eyes.....Open your heart.

http://www.survivinginnumbers.org/
http://project-unbreakable.org/
http://nomore.org/about/
http://itsonus.org/
https://www.notalone.gov/

HEALTH TIDBITS (cont)

CONSENT IS
- VOLUNTARY
- MUTUAL
- SOBER
- WANTED
- INFORMED
- HONEST
- VERBAL
- IMAGINATIVE
- ENTHUSIASTIC
- CREATIVE
- INVOLES BOTH PEOPLE
- ACTIVE AGREEMENT
- A PROCESS, which must be asked for every step of the way

Consent is never implied and cannot be assumed: It is never acceptable to assume that consent is given. Each one of us is responsible for making sure we have consent in every sexual situation. If we are unsure, it is important to clarify what our partner is feeling about the sexual situation.

One can never assume by the way someone dresses, smiles, or looks that s/he wants to have sex.

Silence is never consent. If a person does not verbally say no, it does not mean that s/he means yes.

Many think ‘arousal is consent’ - It is not.

National Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence Survey

CDC Facts