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Attending college can be the beginning of a new chapter in your life. As everything comes together and you settle into your new lifestyle, it is imperative that while adjusting to a new routine and environment to be mindful of your safety and the safety of others.

With that in mind, many may often wonder what is considered to be sexual assault. It can be a sensitive topic for some people to talk about, but it's essential to know the many different types of thing it can consist of. Here are some acts that are considered to be sexual assault:

- Rape- penetration
- Attempted Rape
- Sexual Contact-unwanted fondling/groping
- Sexual Coercion- being convinced to do something you don't want to do
- Sexual Harassment- unwanted sexual advances and cat calling
- Stalking

It's also important to understand what consent means. In the state of New Mexico consent cannot be given by someone who is not of sound mind and body. For example, if someone is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, unconscious, or mentally incompetent, they are not capable to consent to sexual acts. Consent is only a sober, verbal and continuous "yes". It should never be implied or assumed and silence is not equivalent to consent.

According to the 2015 New Mexico State University Student Lifestyle Survey, 5 % of students have been taken advantage of sexually while under the influence of alcohol. While 1.4% of NMSU students acknowledge taking advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol.

Also, according to 2012 statistics from the Center on Disease Control, 19% of undergraduate college women experienced attempted or completed sexual assault since entering college.

The Wellness, Alcohol and Violence Education (WAVE) Program, is located in Corbett Center Student Union, would like to ensure that each student has the tools necessary to stay safe not only on campus but also in the community. We also want students to know where to turn to for help in they are in crisis. The WAVE Program offers a variety of resources and prevention tips for dating safety and sexual assault prevention.

Sexual assault and dating safety are not issues solely for women. According to the CDC, 1.4 % of men report being raped sometime in their lifetime and 5.3% of men report being sexually assaulted.

These statistics are prospectively low due to sexual assault being exceedingly under reported and even more so for men than women.

Sexual assault is never the victim's fault. Rape is not about love or lust, it's about power and control over the victim. According to the 2009-2013 U.S. Department of Justice, National Crime Victimization Study, approximately 4 out of 5 rapes that occur are by someone the victim was friends or acquainted with. The best preventative method against rape is for rapists to stop raping. However, there are some ways to reduce the risk that rape or sexual assault could happen to you.

Here are six tips the WAVE Program hopes every student knows and passes onto other students:

1. Utilize the buddy system: There is safety in numbers! Look after one another. This not only keeps students safe from violence, but also can be a safeguard to not over indulge in alcohol.
2. Don't turn a blind eye to violence: If you see someone who is too drunk or high to realize what is happening, do not hesitate to step in and stop something bad from happening to them.
3. Never leave your drink unattended: Keep your drink with you at all times and if your drink has an unfamiliar taste or smell and makes you feel more buzzed than usual stop drinking it immediately and notify someone you trust.
4. NMSU respects: Avoid individuals who do not respect your boundaries or the boundaries of others.
5. Know what consent is: It's a sober, verbal and continuous "yes". With that being said, it's okay to say "no". Never feel obligated to apologize for saying "no" – feel confident in your right to say "no" to someone. A "no" invalidates any consent previously given.
6. Don't be a bystander: If you see something that feels not quite right, speak up immediately and never leave a vulnerable person alone with someone who may hurt them, even if you know them. Speaking up not only helps keep the person safe in the immediate situation but it sends a strong message that the NMSU culture will not tolerate this kind of behavior.

If you have been raped, take immediate measures to get to a safe place and call 911 (or have a friend or family member call) to report the assault. Avoid showering or changing, go to the nearest hospital and request a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE Kit) to perform a medical exam.

Immediately following the assault, you may be conflicted as to whether or not you want to take legal action; however, having a SANE exam will ensure that you have the necessary evidence should you decide to take legal action.

There are many resources on campus to help you with the aftermath of sexual assault including NMSU Police Department (dial 911 from any campus phone), NMSU Counseling Center (in Garcia Annex Room 100, call 646-2731), Crisis Assistance Listening Line (CALL) (646-2255), Campus Health Center (646-1512) and if the assault occurs between students, staff or faculty it should be reported to the Office of Institutional Equity (646-3635). This is regardless if the assault occurs on or off campus.

Community resources include La Piñon (526-3437) and the Victims' Assistance Unit housed under the Las Cruces Police Department (528-4111).