As the end of the school year approaches, it is important to remind students of the importance of consent. Families of college students are an important part of the conversation surrounding gender-based violence and consent. According to the Campus Sexual Assault Study, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men are sexually assaulted while in college (Krebs, et al., 2007). Families need to start the conversation around consent and gender-based violence early to promote a positive culture surrounding these topics and to eliminate instances of gender-based violence. Even if families have had the conversation years prior to their child starting college, it is important to continue the discussion and review the dynamics of consent.

The University of Cincinnati defines consent as:

informed, freely given, mutual, and can be withdrawn at any time. A person cannot give consent if he or she is mentally or physically incapacitated or impaired such that the person cannot understand the fact, nature or extent of the sexual situation; this includes impairment or incapacitation due to age, alcohol or drug consumption, or being asleep or unconscious. Similarly, a person cannot give consent if force, expressed or implied, duress, intimidation, threats or deception are used on the complainant. Silence or the absence of resistance does not necessarily imply consent. Consent to some sexual acts does not imply consent to other acts, nor does prior consent to sexual activities imply ongoing future consent with that person or consent to that same sexual activity with another person. Whether an individual has taken advantage of a position of influence or authority over an alleged victim may be a factor in determining consent.

Resources for how to talk about gender-based violence include; How to Respond to a Survivor, Helping a Survivor of Sexual Assault, and Have you had the talk?

The three main components of a conversation about gender-based violence and consent include listening, supporting, and referring, families should stress the importance of respect and communication, while also setting the expectation for their student that they have a plan to be an active bystander. An active bystander is an individual who speaks out or acts during a situation that could potentially be dangerous for another person. Active bystanders say something when they see something. For more information about being an active bystander, check out StepUP. Finally, talk about gender-based violence directly. Talking about the topic directly allows for the opportunity to clear up misconceptions and include statistics about why it is a real issue and should be on their radar.

In the event that your student discloses that they have experienced gender-based violence, first, you must listen. Thank them for trusting you and believe their story. Second, support them in whatever options they choose to take. They could ask you to help them report the sexual assault, seek medical attention, or they may just need you to listen. Lastly, refer them to the services that can help. You can provide information about campus, local, and national resources to your student see below;

To report a sexual assault on UC’s campus contact:
UC Police & Public Safety 513.556.1111
UC Title IX Office 513.556.3349

To get confidential support contact:
Women Helping Women 24-hour Crisis Helpline 513.381.5610
UC Campus Advocates 513.556.4418
UC Counseling & Psychological Services 513.556.0648

The Student Wellness Center offers free items, resources, and programs to students throughout the semester! To see what events are planned, visit the Student Wellness Center Calendar.

Student Wellness Center | 675 Steger Student Life Center | 513.556.6124 | @UC_Wellness | uc.edu/wellness