



# THE HUNTING GROUND

## PARENT VIEWER'S GUIDE

*"I would tell parents not to send their students to college without watching this film."*

—Parent of Survivor<sup>1</sup>

 [www.TheHuntingGroundFilm.com](http://www.TheHuntingGroundFilm.com)

 [@TheHuntinGround](https://twitter.com/TheHuntinGround)

 [/TheHuntingGround](https://www.facebook.com/TheHuntingGround)

*“This film doesn’t just say be afraid. It says that it happens and it is not your fault. It happens to women and men, especially if you are gay or a person of color. (My daughter) went to a high school with a social justice and activism framework in a big city. I never dreamed she’d be assaulted in a nice little liberal arts town.” - Survivor Parent<sup>2</sup>*

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## PREVENTION – SUPPORT – ACCOUNTABILITY

As a parent, you may feel scared or overwhelmed after watching *The Hunting Ground*. It is difficult to think about the epidemic of sexual assault on campuses, and yet we can also feel inspired and empowered by the actions of individuals in the film. Know that sexual assault does not have to be a fact of life.

There is a lot *we*, as parents, can do. This guide includes information and resources for you and your family to think through, discuss and take appropriate actions in three sections: 1) prevention, 2) holding institutions and perpetrators accountable, and 3) supporting survivors.

### **PREVENTING SEXUAL ASSAULT.**

**Pages 3-4**

Prevention starts in a very personal way, committing to teach our kids - boys, girls and transgender - about healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, consent and alcohol and drug use. Prevention in our public lives means demanding that our institutions have clear values that they communicate broadly and act on through training, support for survivors and appropriate adjudication.

### **HOLDING PERPETRATORS AND INSTITUTIONS ACCOUNTABLE.**

**Pages 5-6**

Sexual assault needs to be recognized as the serious, life-changing trauma it is. Perpetrators need to be held accountable, whether they are honors students, fraternity brothers, or athletes.

### **SUPPORTING SURVIVORS.**

**Pages 7-8**

For far too long, victims have borne the responsibility for sexual assault, having to answer for what they wear, where they go, and how they act. It is time to reject the notion that anyone deserves sexual assault for any reason. It is time to believe survivors and help them reclaim their power.

*“Do a relationship check, do an inventory, where is your relationship at with your kid? Do you think your kid would come to you? Are they a survivor? Are they a witness? That’s a big issue, as a bystander - what do you do? What is the moral, ethical, thing to do, what’s right? How does that affect them, kids who are witnessing, friends and others - it’s deep.”* - April Willingham, Parent in *The Hunting Ground*<sup>3</sup>

# PREVENTION HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

## PARENTS RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR CHILDREN

There is no one answer for how to talk to your children about sex, sexuality, and sexual assault. Different cultural and religious beliefs and developmental stages all play into how parents decide to talk to their children. What is most important is that you have the conversation.

It’s up to parents and families to use their discretion about when and how to introduce education about sex to your kids. Censoring information about their own bodies and relationships, however, leaves room for them to develop in ways that aren’t aligned with your values, or to receive incorrect information.<sup>4</sup>

The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States has published guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education K-12th grade.<sup>5</sup> The guidelines are helpful in thinking about how to introduce prevention in developmentally appropriate ways. With young children understanding their bodies are their own, middle schoolers exploring what healthy relationships are, and with high school and college students learning that sex is not a goal or a pastime, but has profound emotional and physical importance.



Thinking through how and when to open a conversation about sex and relationships, and why to have them, will help those dialogues go more smoothly.

### CONSIDER:

1. When is the appropriate time to start talking about sexuality and body ownership?
2. What information do you want your children to understand?
3. Who is the best messenger to teach about this information?
4. What are the values you want to share with your children?

These conversations will set up a norm for sharing about sex and sexuality that opens a pathway for young people to share with parents if they have questions or if they are faced with sexual assault in the future.

## CHILDREN’S RELATIONSHIP TO THEMSELVES

When young people have the opportunity to explore and understand themselves as young adults before leaving for college, they enter this environment trusting their judgment and equipped to make decisions that are right for themselves. This includes learning about and examining their own cultural and/or religious beliefs and practices alongside their sense of what it means to be young men and young women in the world.

With the media’s constant barrage of over-sexualized and stereotypical representations of gender, our sons and daughters consistently navigate a confusing set of images, roles and expectations. At the root of the issue of sexual assault is how young boys mature to young men without respecting women or other men and without understanding that consent while intoxicated is not consent, and that sexual assault and rape is an extreme act of violence.



## CONSENT

We have a responsibility to teach our children what consent is and is not. Consent means a mutual agreement for something to happen. During sexual relations consent is everything. If at any time consent is not given or changes, then this decision must be respected. Otherwise consent is being violated. Consent cannot be given while intoxicated.

Watching the [Tea and Consent](#) short video together is a great way to start this discussion with your child.

Affirmative consent, or “Yes Means Yes”, is a growing legal movement advocating for mutual active agreement to sexual activity. New York’s

“Enough is Enough” law states that all “participants give a knowing, affirmative, voluntary and conscious agreement to engage in sexual activity. Consent can be given by words or actions, as long as those words or actions create clear permission regarding willingness to engage in the sexual activity. Silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent.”<sup>7</sup> The law applies across sexual orientation and gender identity. California (SB 967) has passed a similar measure, and others are pending across the country.

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

- **90% of acquaintance rape and sexual assault on college campuses involves the use of alcohol by the assailant, victim or both.**<sup>8</sup>
- **In one of the most comprehensive polls to date on sexual assault on college campuses, the Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation poll found two-thirds of sexual assault victims say they had been drinking alcohol just before the incident occurred.**<sup>9</sup>

The statistics speak for themselves. Alcohol and drug use are among the most significant risk factors contributing to sexual assault on campus. Regardless of whether the survivor and/or the assailant have been drinking, however, the fault remains 100% with the assailant, never the victims.

*Whether or not you want it, society raises your kids. The same people who send their daughters to school send their sons. It's not as if there's a type of family that raises boys to rape, and another type that raises girls. There's something else at work here. We need to teach our boys the affirmative message that it's not OK to rape.”*

- April Willingham<sup>6</sup>

As parents, we cannot control our children’s social interactions once they leave for college, but we can inform and prepare them to stay safe and aware. This begins with discussions about the negative and potentially dangerous physical and psychological effects of alcohol and drug use during their teen years. Your child may have received information during middle or high school, but the conversations

about their use (and abuse) while at university needs to be heard and received with a different sense of urgency.

It is vital to discuss how alcohol and drugs can serve as a social crutch in new environments such as a campus party, bar or sports event. Be explicit with power dynamics that

may surface between people under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Talk with your child about the possibility that perpetrators may use alcohol both to impair potential victims and as a deluded means of justifying their own behavior. Openly discussing how to make responsible decisions in these social situations may be the critical “dress rehearsal” your child draws from later on.

## BEING A FRIEND, A BYSTANDER, AN UPSTANDER

Research on developing the necessary skills and abilities to take a helpful action on behalf of a friend, acquaintance or stranger indicates that bystanders (also referred to as witnesses, defenders, or upstanders) are a key piece of prevention work.<sup>10</sup> Using the language of bystander and upstander and nurturing healthy friendships with men and women go far in modelling for our children ethical and moral decision making. Understanding that 82% of sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone known to the victim, the importance of circles of friends and acquaintances in prevention is clear. Accessing online tools such as the [Circle of 6](#) may also provide extra support at critical times.



# HOLDING PERPETRATORS AND INSTITUTIONS ACCOUNTABLE

*"It never crossed our mind that they wouldn't do right."* -Tom Seeberg, parent in *The Hunting Ground*

*"It is up to all of us parents, teachers, faculty, trustees to solve this problem."* -Kirby Dick, director *The Hunting Ground*

*"We do have power as parents, we should be flooding our high schools, colleges, offices with inquiries about their rape policies. What are your statistics? Can we see copies of your report to the Department of Education about Title IX status? If we are alums of the same institutions, we should be holding the universities to the fire. When they call for donation, we need to ask about rape policies. We have to make it way less beneficial to sweep assault under the rug. As parents, we have the power of the purse."* -April Willingham<sup>12</sup>

## MAKING INSTITUTIONS DO RIGHT

Parents are a vital constituency who can exercise political power and influence systemic change both in higher education institutions and in government. *The Hunting Ground* highlights and the Action Toolkit<sup>13</sup> developed for the film contains several recommendations for how parents can influence the policies of colleges and universities.

## DO THE RESEARCH.

You can start by asking prospective or current schools about their sexual violence policies and support services during campus tours or parent events. Find out if the school has been in the news for mishandling sexual violence. Ask questions of administrators. Scour their literature and see if the campus is considered a pro-active campus with ongoing prevention education and support services readily available.

## LEARN THE LAWS

### Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that receives federal funding. Sex discrimination includes sexual

harassment, sexual battery, sexual assault, and rape that are "so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively bars the victim's access to an educational opportunity or benefit." Even a single instance of rape or sexual assault by another student, faculty, or staff member could meet this standard.<sup>14</sup>

### **Title IX requires any school receiving federal funds to:**

- **write** and widely distribute a policy and grievance procedure for sexual assault;
- **appoint** a Title IX coordinator to oversee all complaints;
- **respond** promptly and effectively to complaints; and
- **perform** adequate, reliable and impartial investigations of complaints.

Victims of sexual assault and rape have used Title IX to argue that their schools' failures to acknowledge and respond to sexual violence created a hostile learning environment for female, male and gender non-conforming students. Currently 129 universities are under federal investigation for how they handled sexual assault. The U.S. Department of Education publishes an annual list of Title IX sexual assault investigations that are underway.<sup>15</sup>

## **The Clery Act and The Campus SaVE Act**

The Clery Act is a federal law requiring United States colleges and universities to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses and is enforced by the Department of Education. In regards to sexual assault the institution is required to (1) Publish an Annual Security Report; (2) Disclose crime statistics for incidents that occur on campus, in unobstructed public areas immediately adjacent to or running through the campus and at certain non-campus facilities; (3) Issue timely warnings about Clery Act crimes which pose a serious or ongoing threat to students and employees; and (4) Devise an emergency response, notification, and testing policy.

If your institution receives federal funding (i.e. financial aid) and they fail to report this information, a Clery Complaint can be filed. Student allies, faculty, alums, and other concerned people can file a Clery complaint on behalf of survivors. If found in violation, a college/ university can be fined up to \$35,000.<sup>16</sup>

The Campus SaVE Act amended The Clery Act adding important protections for survivors of interpersonal violence and stalking.

## **Campus Accountability & Safety Act-Senate Bill 590-Pending**

On the Federal Level [Senate Bill 590](#) would require higher education institutions to include annual campus security reports in their information to current and prospective students and staff. Parents can call on senators to urge them to support and move this legislation forward.

## **Title II**

Title II of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

specifically prohibits discrimination from programs and institutions that receive federal funding. Students that believe they have been discriminated against because of their disability have the right to file a federal complaint with the Office for Civil Rights of The Department of Education (DOE).

Under the ADA a disability can include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety; all three psychological conditions that often occur following a sexual assault. To learn more about if Title II could be an avenue to pursue see information included on [End Rape on Campus](#).

**LEVERAGE YOUR INFLUENCES AS AN ALUMNI.** Alumni are a major source of giving for universities. When annual solicitations arrive, ask your alma mater about opportunities to fund violence prevention efforts on campus.

## **SCREEN THE HUNTING GROUND FILM**

Book a screening at your school or community group. The Hunting Ground is a great way to start conversations between parents and kids and between families and schools. For screening information, go to: [www.rocofilms.com](http://www.rocofilms.com)

*The Hunting Ground* is also available on iTunes.

## **CONSIDER USING THE FILM'S THEME SONG AS A CONVERSATION STARTER**

\*Be advised the video for the song has emotionally graphic and difficult visual content to view. The lyrics may be also be something to consider using when the film is being screened.

[“Til it Happens to You”](#) Lady Gaga (singer) and Diane Warren (co-writer)



Photo credit: Chain Camera Pictures



# SUPPORTING SURVIVORS AS PARENTS

*“Every time I think about this, I thank my stars my daughter felt she could talk to me, that we had the emotional space for that kind of exchange. . .” - April Willingham<sup>17</sup>*

*“As a survivor’s father, she will always be my little girl and I need her to know that there is nothing that will ever change that. I don’t see her as anything less, and perhaps as maybe even more by having the strength to confront this criminal event.” - Survivor Dad<sup>18</sup>*

*“The really tricky thing for parents, your role is supposedly to say don’t drink to excess, don’t go to parties, don’t walk home alone, but that’s antithetical to them coming to you and telling you after it happens. It perpetuates rape culture by making rules for the potential victims. The conversation needs to be, this happens and it’s not your fault and I believe you. You can talk to me about this. I want you to know your rights if this happens to you.” - Survivor Mom<sup>19</sup>*

**END RAPE ON CAMPUS**, is a non-profit organization founded by Annie Clark and Andrea Pino. The two activists featured in the film-offer the following advice to parents:

When survivors do share their stories, some choose to tell only their closest friends and family members, while others may tell a wide circle of friends, family, and community members. Some may never tell anyone. . . . No matter whether or not a survivor chooses to tell others about their assault, it is important to support the survivor and their decisions.<sup>20</sup>

## **NO VICTIM BLAMING**

Sexual assault is not specific to women; men, transgender and gender nonconforming individuals are also affected. One in five women and one in 16 men are sexually assaulted while in college.<sup>21</sup> Though specific information

about college campuses is unavailable, one in two transgender people will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, for far too long, victims have borne the responsibility for sexual assault. When sexual assault is reported, questions reflexively arise about where the victim was, what she was wearing, whether she was drinking, and what messages she was sending to the perpetrator. All of these questions imply that the assault is somehow the responsibility of the victim to prevent.

The conversation needs to shift to include the responsibility of (mostly) men not to commit assault. Any touching requires consent. Consent can be complicated and is a concept that requires exploration. Educating potential perpetrators needs to have the same weight and importance as teaching about healthy relationships, and common sense thinking about safety.

*“When our daughter told my wife and I what had happened to her, my first reaction was one of rage and ways to seek revenge against her attacker. I think those responses, while natural, are a main reason our children don’t want to tell us directly of the events. What we need to remember is that our first response should be to love, protect, and help our child. This is not something they did, it is something that was done to them and in many cases done by someone they trusted. They need our complete attention and all of our resources focused on their wellbeing.” - Survivor Dad<sup>23</sup>*

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN ASSAULTED

The following steps come from *The Hunting Ground’s* action tool kit:<sup>24</sup>

- **Believe them.** “Survivors need to be believed. (Sexual assault) is not something that women make up to get attention so they can be in a movie or in the papers. I want my kids to know they will be believed.” - Survivor Mom<sup>25</sup>
- **Validate their feelings.** There is no right way to feel. Whatever emotions your child experiences is what is right for them.
- **Put them at ease.** Let them know that you are there for them and receptive to what they are sharing with you.
- **Tell your child that what happened to them was not their fault** and that they didn’t deserve it.
- **Empower them.** Let your child know they are in complete control over any next steps. How they proceed is entirely up to them.
- **Help them find support.** If you are far away and can’t get to them, help them find someone they trust to give them a ride, find them a safe place to stay, or any other emotional support. It is not recommended that someone who has just been assaulted stay alone.
- **Offer to help them find your school’s victim advocate services.** In high school this may be a trusted teacher, school counselor, dean or Title IX Coordinator. In college this may be the same and/or your school may have a resource center specifically for survivors of assault.
- **Express admiration for their courage** and recognize how difficult this must have been for them.
- **Continue to offer them support and care.** This may mean listening to them talk about their experience with the assault and/or taking them out to spend time together and engage in activities that are enjoyable and not related to the assault. Make sure you respond to their needs. You don’t have to do this alone, encourage your student to seek professional support through various resources.

## COPING WITH YOUR OWN TRAUMA: SELF-CARE

*“To witness my kid going through this, to see it hurting her, interrupting her life, retraumatizing her. It was devastating.” - April Willingham<sup>26</sup>*

If your child has disclosed their experience of sexual assault, it is important to recognize your experience as a secondary survivor. Living through the experience of trauma with your child will be extremely difficult. While you may be one of the primary support systems for your child, it is critical for you to find support for yourself in order to remain fully present and supportive for your child. That can mean professional support, the support of a close friend or reaching out to parent support groups. End Rape on Campus continues to grow a small network of parents and other secondary survivors to support one another.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the epidemic of sexual assault is not new. *The Hunting Ground* will likely bring up memories of sexual assault for many, including parents. In the event that thinking or talking about sexual assault brings up memories of trauma, it is important to get care and support. The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN.org) hosts a national hotline in English and Spanish. Other resources are available at the end of this guide.



# RESOURCES

[Breakthrough](#)

[Circleof6App.com](#)

[CleryCenter.org](#)

[CultureofRespect.org](#)

[EndRapeOnCampus.org](#)

FAR - [FacultyAgainstRape.net](#)

[FuturesWithoutViolence.org](#)

[goodmenproject.com](#)

[ItsOnUs.org](#)

[KnowYourIX.org](#)

Man Up - [manupcampaign.org](#)

National Alliance to End Sexual Violence

- [endsexualviolence.org](#)

National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

- [NCDSV.org](#)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

- [NSVRC.org](#)

[NOMORE.org](#)

[NotAlone.gov](#)

[PreventConnect.org](#)

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network

- [RAINN.org](#)

[SaferCampus.org](#)

[TheOtherFreshman15.org](#)

UltraViolet - [weareultraviolet.org](#)



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1. Interview, November 5, 2015.
2. Internal communication, November 10, 2015.
3. Interview, November 4, 2015.
4. Regardless of a family's background and beliefs, information about sex and sexuality is widely available. A 2008 survey from the National Campaign to End Teen Pregnancy reports the 25% of young people age 14-17 rely on the media and their peers for information about sex. Buhi et al in the Journal of Adolescent Health say that half of 7th-12th graders report looking online for information about sex and sexuality, though the information available there may be inaccurate, or may not reflect a family's values.
5. <http://www.siecus.org/data/global/images/guidelines.pdf>, accessed November 14, 2015.
6. Interview, November 4, 2015.
7. <http://affirmativeconsent.com/whatisaffirmative-consent/>, accessed November 6, 2015.
8. <https://ncadd.org/about-addiction/addiction-update/alcohol-drugs-and-crime>, accessed November 2, 2015.
9. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/local/2015/06/12/1-in-5-women-say-they-were-violated/>, accessed November 2, 2015.
10. The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault: <https://www.notalone.gov/assets/bystander-summary.pdf>, accessed November 4, 2015.
11. <https://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/sexual-assault-offenders>, accessed November 12, 2015.
12. Interview, November 12, 2015.
13. <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/the-hunting-ground-action-toolkit-2/>, accessed November 4, 2015.
14. <http://endrapeoncampus.org/title-ix>, accessed November 4, 2015.
15. <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-list-higher-education-institutions-open-title-ix-sexual-violence-investigations>, accessed November 5, 2015.
16. <http://endrapeoncampus.org/the-clery-act/>, accessed November 4, 2015.
17. Interview, November 4, 2015.
18. Internal communication, November 10, 2015.
19. Interview, November 5, 2015.
20. <http://endrapeoncampus.org/resources/#parents>, accessed November 5, 2015.
21. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/local/sexual-assault-poll/>, accessed November 5, 2015.
22. FORGE, 2005, Sexual Violence in the Transgender Community Survey, unpublished data; G. Kenagy, 2005, "The Health and Social Service Needs of Transgender People in Philadelphia," International Journal of Transgenderism 8(2/3):49-56; G. Kenagy and W. Bostwick, 2005, "Health and Social Service Needs of Transgendered People in Chicago," International Journal of Transgenderism 8(2/3):57-66.
23. Internal communication, November 10, 2015.
24. <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/the-hunting-ground-action-toolkit-2/>, accessed November 4, 2015.
25. Interview, November 5, 2015.
26. Interview, November 4, 2015.