

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

The majority of student organizations and teams provide amazing, positive experiences for their members. However, some organizations engage in negative behaviors known as hazing – acts of humiliation or demeaning tasks meant to ‘prove’ an individual’s commitment and worthiness to joining a group.



IDENTIFY HAZING

Hazing comes in many forms and definitions may vary, but it is generally agreed that hazing is any action taken, or situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule, risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team whether new or not, regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.

The legal definition may vary from state to state but trust your common sense. Here are a number of activities that may be considered hazing by your school or organization:

- Activities meant to ‘earn’ a place within an organization or team that seem inconsistent with someone’s character or values
- Activities that are embarrassing or mentally/physically abusive
- Forced or coerced abuse of alcohol
- Personal servitude or meaningless tasks

WARNING SIGNS OF HAZING

Your student may or may not feel comfortable expressing concern directly to you if being hazed. Here are some key things to look for that might help you identify whether or not your student may be experiencing hazing:

- Sudden change in behavior or attitude after joining the organization or team
- Wanting to leave the organization or team with no real explanation
- Sudden decrease in communication with friends and family

- Physical or psychological exhaustion
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unexplained injuries or illness
- Change in sleeping or eating habits
- Withdrawal from normal activities
- Expressed feeling of sadness or feeling of worthlessness
- Increase in secrecy and unwillingness to share details

Questions to ask your student before he or she joins an organization or team:

- Do you know what hazing is?
- How can you stand up or say no if it occurs?
- Do you know how to report hazing?
- Do you know your school’s policies against hazing, and the consequences?

Questions to ask after involvement begins:

- What kinds of activities are involved in joining this group or team? Are you comfortable with all of them?
- Is alcohol involved in any of these activities?
- Are you asked to do anything that coaches or school administrators are not aware of?
- Have you met with the organization’s advisor or coach to discuss?