

# “WE DON’T HAZE”

## A COMPANION PREVENTION BRIEF FOR GENERAL AUDIENCES

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## Introduction & purpose of this document

*We Don't Haze* helps people understand hazing, how it can be harmful, and how groups of people can create strong connections and meaningful traditions without hazing. It is meant to inspire you and others to think about and get involved in **hazing prevention**. The film focuses on hazing at the college level, but the information shared by people in the film applies many types of groups and organizations -- and to individuals of all ages who are exposed to hazing and want to play a role in its prevention.

As an extension of the film, this companion document is a resource for general audiences -- including students, educators, families, and community members -- who want to understand and communicate effectively about hazing and help prevent the harm associated with hazing. It provides a research-based overview of hazing and reviews simple action steps for prevention, focusing on what individuals can do in their own sphere of influence as allies, friends, family, educators, and community members.

Hazing is complex and there's no simple solution to its prevention. Even so, ***there's a lot that each of us can do*** to prevent hazing. Accounts provided by college students in the film highlight how positive non-hazing traditions and healthy group norms are possible. As one student, Chelsea, says in the film, "*It's on us to make a difference in the generation we are and to not think that hazing is a good tradition to keep going.*" We hope this companion brief for *We Don't Haze* will help you learn more about hazing and the role you can play in its prevention.

## Why should you care about hazing?

**What does hazing have to do with YOU?** As you may know from experience, from the film, or from any of the countless news reports on the topic, hazing can have horrible consequences for individuals involved, their families, members of organizations, and even people in the surrounding community. Ultimately, hazing is a community issue with ripple effects beyond the immediate groups or settings where it occurs. Hazing is a type of abuse that can interfere with the ability of children, young adults, and adults to thrive as learners and as leaders, whether they're in school, in a job, in the military, or a part of any type of group or organization.

**Each of us has a responsibility to make a difference by being informed about hazing and committing to hazing prevention.**

Acknowledging that hazing occurs and that it can cause harm is a critical starting point. All too often, hazing is misunderstood or minimized as either an accepted, positive aspect of group bonding or as harmless pranks and antics. The tragic stories shared by family members in *We Don't Haze* are a reminder that hazing can be lethal. Personal accounts in the film also show humiliating, degrading, and abusive aspects of hazing.

It is important to understand that while hazing is done by individuals, it is part of and shaped by institutional and group culture. If members of a school club value and accept hazing as normal, that shared understanding means those involved may be more likely

**Hazing prevention is about working toward the kind of world in which we want to live, with the kinds of leaders, young and old, who we want to guide our future: strong leaders who have the skills to build cohesive groups with members who are engaged, feel empowered, and challenged to be the best they can be without having to subject their peers to abuse in the name of “tradition,” or “bonding.”**

to participate and/or expect hazing as a regular part of membership in that group. Alternatively, if members of that club have a shared understanding that hazing is harmful and that it goes against the values of their group, they will be more likely to create non-hazing traditions and bonds.

Many of the organizations in which hazing occurs -- such as sports teams, performing arts groups, social clubs, and honor societies -- are “living-learning laboratories” for leadership development. When a person experiences hazing in these settings, what are they learning about leadership? From this perspective, hazing can interfere with the development of safe, healthy, and inclusive leadership practices.

### **So, what does hazing prevention mean for YOU?**

Any effort to understand the nature of hazing means thinking about **the roles we can all play in hazing**

**prevention.** Hazing prevention is about working toward the kind of world in which we want to live, with the kinds of leaders we want to guide our future: strong leaders who have the skills to build cohesive groups with members who are engaged, feel empowered, and challenged to be the best they can be without having to subject their peers to abuse in the name of “tradition,” or “bonding.”

**As a community issue with far-reaching effects, each of us has a responsibility to make a difference by being informed about hazing and committing to hazing prevention.**

*This **Companion Brief for General Audiences** focuses on individual responses to hazing. An additional **Companion Brief for College & University Staff** is available as a resource for college campus professionals. That brief presents strategies educational leaders can use to promote a “comprehensive approach” to hazing prevention, one that addresses the problem of hazing at multiple levels and in multiple ways, and that can be applied in school, college, and university contexts. Both briefs seek to broaden readers’ abilities to understand and communicate effectively about hazing and to contribute to transforming hazing cultures. Like the film, these briefs point to the urgency of hazing prevention as a critical necessity in our schools and communities.*

## Getting Started: What is Hazing?

Though hazing is frequently reported in the news, headlines rarely tell the full story and often provide only a limited view of who was involved and the chain of events that led to the harmful and sometimes tragic outcomes. Limited and distorted views of hazing are a barrier to communication and hazing prevention. Beginning with a clear understanding of what constitutes hazing is a vital first step in hazing prevention. Here is the definition of hazing:

**“Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.”**

(Allan & Madden, 2008).

Based on this definition, when does an activity cross the line into hazing? The following **three components of the definition of hazing** are the key to understanding hazing:

1. **Group context:** Hazing is associated with the process of joining and maintaining membership in a group.
2. **Abusive behavior:** Hazing involves behaviors and activities that are potentially humiliating and degrading, with potential to cause physical, psychological and/or emotional harm.
3. **Regardless of an individual’s willingness to participate:** The “choice” to participate in a hazing activity is deceptive because it’s usually paired with peer pressure and coercive power dynamics that are common in the process of gaining membership in some groups.

While most individuals associate hazing with the process of joining or being part of a group (1<sup>st</sup> component) and with activities that cause physical or emotional harm or have the potential to cause harm, (2<sup>nd</sup> component), people often rationalize a particular behavior or fail to see it as hazing by saying, “We gave people a choice of whether or not to do it.” The issue of willingness to participate, often discussed as “consent” (3<sup>rd</sup> component), requires further explanation.

Peer pressure is a key part of hazing, whether it involves explicitly abusive or physically harmful behavior, or seemingly moderate or low risk forms of hazing that appear to be harmless fun, humor, or pranks. The power of peer pressure combined with an

individual's strong desire to belong to a group can create a coercive environment -- and *coercion limits free consent*. While it may seem as though a person went along with an activity "willingly," appearances can be deceiving. If a person sees the activity as a "tradition" or "bonding" event connected to their ability to gain or maintain membership, and believes that participating could jeopardize their social standing in the group, they may feel pressured to go along with behaviors that they would otherwise not be willing to endure or condone. Going along with something because you feel pressured to do so does not constitute consent. So let's be extra clear: ***True consent cannot be given when people feel pressured or forced to participate in an activity.***

The harm or potential harm of hazing is often hidden (Apgar, 2013). Each individual comes to an incident of hazing with previous personal experiences and stress management abilities. Reportedly 1 out of 5 young people deal with some form of mental distress (Langford, 2009). A significant number of individuals have a history of trauma, interpersonal violence, substance use, depression, eating disorders, suicidal tendencies and other mental health issues. Whether apparent on the surface or known by others, these prior experiences can influence the impact of hazing as well as the inclination to haze. How one person copes with hazing or being hazed may be very different than another. And while physical harm may be observable, the emotional and psychological impact of hazing is often hidden or at least not readily observable. Experiences of hazing have the capacity to negatively impact an individual's sense of personal and social identity, security, and understanding of what it means to be part of a group and to be a leader within a group or community. And because the potential emotional harm of hazing and being hazed is not easily detected, the scars caused by hazing have the potential to be enduring and very difficult to treat or heal.

Understanding and learning to consider the three key components of hazing prepares individuals to notice hazing when it happens and to ask questions that may help determine whether an event or activity constitutes hazing.

### **Questions to Ask to Determine if an Event or Activity is Hazing**

- Is this part of gaining membership in a group?
- What are some of the social, emotional, or personal consequences of these behaviors?
- If someone doesn't want to participate, could that jeopardize their standing in the group?
- Could this potentially cause physical, psychological, or emotional harm, including feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, or degradation?
- Are people involved being pressures or coerced to participate?
- Is everyone involved equal or are there unequal power dynamics involved?



## What do we know from research about the nature & extent of hazing?

### NATIONAL STUDY OF STUDENT HAZING

**11,000+** survey responses

Survey responses from **53** college campuses nationwide.

**300+** personal interviews

Interviews conducted at **20+** colleges and universities in all regions of the United States

**What comes to mind when YOU think of hazing?** People often think about examples of hazing from popular culture or the media. For instance, if you saw the comedy movie *Animal House*, you'd think that hazing only happens in college fraternities. But we know from research that this doesn't tell the full story.

In actuality, hazing is not unusual in the least, but rather takes place in all sorts of groups and organizations — and not just those associated with college life. In fact, **47% of students in a national study reported experiencing hazing in high school.**

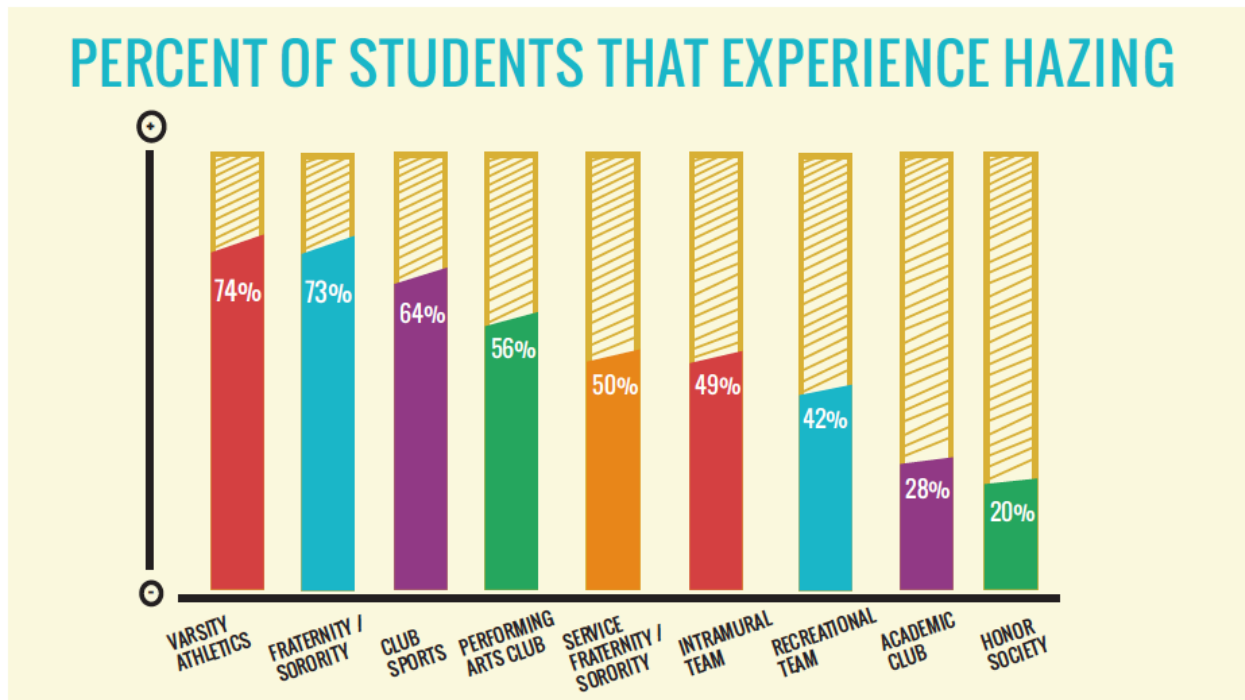
Therefore, experiences and norms around hazing do not begin when students enter college (Allan and Madden, 2012). Early experiences of hazing set the stage for what takes place when an individual goes to college or becomes involved in other groups. Hazing isn't limited to schools and colleges -- it can occur in any context -- like the military or other professional settings where individuals go through a process of gaining membership in a group or organization.

Currently, research about hazing is most focused on educational settings. The following findings from **the National Study on Student Hazing (Allan & Madden, 2012; 2008)** provide a portrait of hazing in schools and colleges and are a starting point for what we could learn about hazing in other types of organizations:

- Approximately half of students in college (55%) and high school (47%) involved in clubs, teams, and organizations report experiencing hazing or activities that meet the definition of hazing.
- Both men (61%) and women (52%) experience hazing on college campuses.
- Hazing cuts across racial identities and all students on college campuses and in high schools are potentially at risk.
- Hazing occurs across many types of student groups.
- In college, groups that reportedly haze the most include varsity athletic teams (74%) and fraternities and sororities (73%), but they are far from the only groups where hazing is common.

- Other college groups that reportedly engage in hazing include club sports (64%), performing arts organizations (56%), service organizations (50%), intramural teams (49%), and recreation clubs (42%).

These statistics show that hazing is happening in many types of groups and that young people are involved regardless of gender, race or ethnicity, academic interests, or extracurricular activity.



Allan & Madden, 2008

**What do people do when they haze?** We know from the data that some college students participate in high-risk and potentially illegal behaviors to belong to student groups or teams. Alcohol use, sexual harassment, and assault are also reported in college and high school hazing incidents. The risk of physical harm from these types of hazing is problematic and sometimes (but not always) visible for others to see.

Based on a national study (Allan & Madden, 2008, 2012), the most frequently reported types of hazing across different student groups include:

- Participating in a drinking game (26%)
- Singing or chanting by yourself or with other members of a group in public in a situation that is not a related event, game, or practice (17%)
- Associating with specific people and not others (12%)

- Drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out (12%)
- Sleep deprivation (11%)
- Being screamed, yelled, or cursed at by other members (10%)
- Drinking large amounts of a non-alcoholic beverage (10%)
- Being awakened during the night by other members (9%)
- Attending a skit or roast where other members of the group are humiliated (6%)
- Enduring harsh weather conditions without appropriate clothing (6%)
- Performing sex acts with the opposite gender (6%)
- Wearing clothing that is embarrassing and not part of a uniform (6%)

Some of the hazing activities on this list -- such as embarrassment or not being allowed to talk with certain people -- may seem mild relative to other behaviors. But even these activities are problematic because they can create a climate where individuals come to expect or accept more dangerous forms of hazing -- such as forced abuse of alcohol, unwanted sexual contact, emotional abuse, or physical violence.

It's vital to remember that hazing is not just defined by a list of behaviors or activities. **Focusing solely on a list of behaviors fails to sufficiently address the context and power dynamics involved.** Being familiar with problematic and prohibited behaviors or activities as a means to inform yourself or others is important, but not enough to prevent hazing from happening. It is essential to also understand how to navigate the often confusing elements of context, coercion and the typically unequal power dynamics that make hazing so troubling.

Water intoxication deaths from hazing are tragic examples of these power dynamics. Of course it would seem absurd to include consumption of water on a list of prohibited activities, however, when drinking water is done in an abusive way, it can cause grave harm and is considered hazing. Exposure to the three-pronged definition of hazing described earlier is essential for preparing individuals to determine when a behavior or activity crosses the line into hazing.

**The harm caused by hazing can happen for both the person being hazed and for the person who is doing the hazing.**

It's also important to remember that the impact of hazing is not only about how hazing happens, but also relates to past experiences and how that might affect what hazing others or being hazed feels like. While we typically associate the harm of hazing with the "victim" or person who is hazed, hazing events can also cause potential damage to the

person who is doing the hazing. For example, hazing another person in a physically abusive way could bring up deeply traumatic feelings for a survivor of physical abuse, or could at least cause the person hazing others to continue struggling with very difficult feelings and experiences.

## Why is hazing such a difficult problem to address?

Despite a willingness to address hazing, many people believe that hazing occurs in secrecy and isolation and are unsure of how and where to begin addressing the problem.

But according to the National Study on Student Hazing, hazing is not nearly as underground as many might think (Allan & Madden, 2012; 2008). For example, college students who have been hazed are likely to talk to their friends (48%), other group members (41%), and family members (26%). Twenty-five percent of college students surveyed perceived their coach or advisor to be aware of hazing, and some indicated that their coach or advisor was present and participated in the hazing activity. Twenty-five percent also report that alumni were present during hazing experiences and 36% indicate that some hazing behaviors occurred in a public space. These findings show that hazing is talked about, and often occurs in public settings where it can be observed by young people and adults.

Moreover, it's common for people who experience hazing not to think of the incidents as hazing. More than half of college students who belonged to clubs, organizations, and teams indicated they had experienced behavior that met the definition of hazing, but only 5% of them said they were hazed (Allan & Madden, 2012; 2008).

If hazing is so common, why is it so difficult for people to recognize it when it happens? Here are some things we've learned from surveying and talking with students across the United States:

- Sometimes individuals see hazing as a positive part of group bonding rather than as a form of interpersonal violence or abuse.
- Some people think hazing is a "normal" part of being in a group or organization and they accept it because they think it's related to group traditions, initiation, rites of passage, group bonding, and youthful antics, pranks and stunts.
- With such positive ideals about belonging in a group, some people have a hard time recognizing and accepting that a group could also promote something as negative and potentially harmful as hazing (e.g. "My group wouldn't do anything to harm me").
- Many people tend to ignore the negative aspects of hazing if they believe it has a positive purpose or result for themselves or their group.
- People are more likely to recognize hazing if it involves physical harm.

- People often think that if an individual “goes along with” an activity, that means the person consents or agrees to participate and therefore the activity is not hazing. **It is hard for people to understand that true consent cannot be given when people feel pressured or forced to participate in an activity.**

These attitudes or assumptions are fueled by what research on interpersonal violence suggests is a common misperception about hazing and the social norms of group culture. Many people assume that if hazing is happening, the majority of people in a group believe that hazing is acceptable. If you think that a majority of your peers support hazing, it is much more daunting to take steps to change this behavior. The pressure to conform to your peers may prohibit you from acting according to your own beliefs when you think they differ from that of the majority.

Yet our hazing prevention work suggests that with hazing, as with other forms of interpersonal violence, it is likely that only a **minority** of members of a group actually support behaviors that are humiliating, embarrassing, or that potentially harm others, while the **majority** disapprove of these behaviors and wish it was possible to put a stop to them. This “**misperception of the social norm**” is a misunderstanding of what the majority think or believe and correcting the misperception holds much potential for hazing prevention.

Often, people who do want to take steps to address, speak out against, and report hazing, lack the skills to do so or may be unsure of who to speak with or where to go for help. For example, if you are a newcomer, an established member, or a group leader, the responsibility and the potential consequences of speaking out can seem daunting. You may feel uncertain about questioning how a team or group welcomes new members, how members are assigned responsibilities, or other accepted rules for how a group functions. You may worry that if you question or speak against certain group practices, others will think you don’t value “traditions” that supposedly distinguish and sustain their group. You might be concerned about dealing with conflict with friends or becoming an outsider in the group. Whether you are a student, friend, family member, advisor, coach, alumnus, or general community member, **what can you do if you observe or hear about hazing? What knowledge and skills do you need to recognize hazing and intervene?**

## You have a role to play in hazing prevention

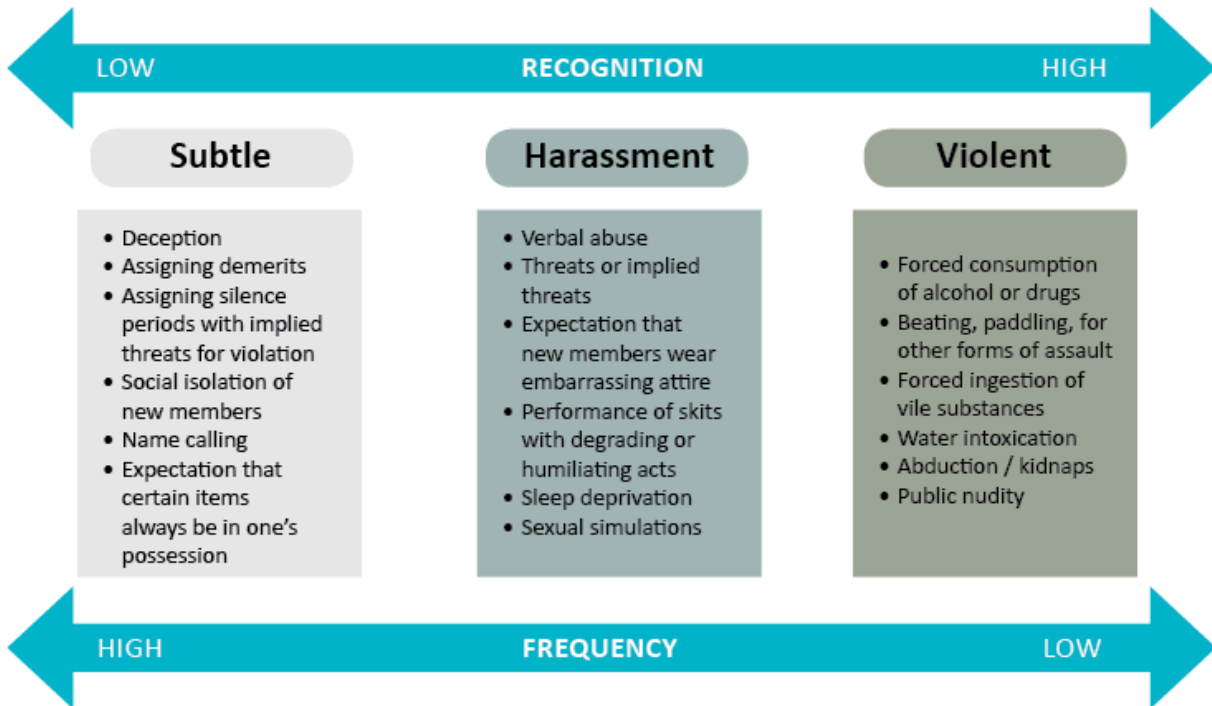
One of the first steps in recognizing your role in hazing prevention is to understand that hazing is a community issue. We know that hazing often occurs in public spaces and people involved often share stories or concerns about their hazing experiences with family members and friends outside the group (Allan & Madden, 2008). So while hazing may have the strongest impact on the people immediately involved, the people surrounding them are likely to observe and hear about it as well. And everyone is affected when a group, organization, or community feels potentially unsafe.

Observers of hazing can play a critical role in intervening and preventing hazing and offering support to hazing victims, as well as engaging constructively with those who instigate and perpetuate hazing. Any situation in which a person observes or hears about hazing and takes steps to support and/or prevent potential harm to those involved or to themselves is known as “**Bystander Intervention**” (Berkowitz, 2009; Stapleton & Allan, 2014). **A bystander is any person who is present as an observer, spectator, witness, or passerby at an event or incident, but who does not themselves take an active part.** Bystander intervention is a helpful way to think about how you can be part of the solution in the problem of hazing. There are 5 stages of bystander intervention, which build upon each other.



## STAGE 1

**Notice behavior.** Because hazing is typically rationalized, minimized or expected as a part of group membership, you may not notice it. How do you take notice of something that you, or everyone around you, seems to think is normal or acceptable? What does hazing look like?



Becoming more skilled at observing hazing involves sharpening your awareness to notice the full range of hazing behaviors. The figure above shows the range or “spectrum” of hazing as it relates to the type and degree of harm (from subtle, to harassment, to violent), and the typical frequency and level of recognition for each type of hazing. This figure shows that subtle forms of hazing are least recognized and happen more frequently, whereas violent hazing is most readily recognized but less frequent. In other words, people more commonly associate hazing with violent rather than subtle hazing. It is also important to note how the arrows point in both directions. That is, hazing can begin at any point on the spectrum and the behaviors can continue in one or both directions.

Theoretically, if we can increase **recognition** of the types of hazing that happen with the highest **frequency** – those which tend to be minimized as a normal aspect of group culture – we can increase opportunities for intervention in all types of hazing, from the subtle to the most violent. First, we educate people about what hazing is. Next, we



focus on helping more people notice subtle forms of hazing that go on all the time, and help them to intervene to put a stop to these types of behaviors. In doing so, we interrupt or begin to change group climates. **When subtle forms of hazing are less accepted as an appropriate norm, extreme and high risk forms of hazing become even more recognizable and unacceptable.**

**How can YOU begin to notice hazing?** You can begin by paying attention to the language that often justifies hazing behavior. For instance, hazing is often minimized as “just a tradition,” “group bonding,” or an “initiation.” While not all traditions or initiations will involve hazing, if you hear friends, family, or others using these terms, pay close attention to what is said and ask follow-up questions to clarify.

Many actual instances of hazing are overlooked by those in the community who have the potential to intervene and prevent harm. Becoming familiar with warning signs for hazing is another vital aspect of bystander intervention.

## **Warning Signs That May Indicate that a Person Experienced Hazing**

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- Changes in behavior and communication that may correspond with the timing of a person becoming involved with an organization
- Disrupted patterns of behavior: not attending classes, change in grades, becoming difficult to reach or other changes in patterns of communication, not coming home as/when expected, not eating meals as usual, change in personal hygiene, only associating with certain people
- Describes activities that would meet the definition of hazing, but refers to them as “traditions” or “initiations”
- Chronic fatigue
- Symptoms of depression
- Friends, roommates, staff in organization or school, parents, or siblings express concerns about change in behavior
- Unusual photos posted on social media

## **Warning Signs that May Indicate Hazing in Organizations or Institutions**

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- Recent official reports and conduct cases on hazing
- Unofficial reports and social media about hazing
- Reputation for hazing
- Is information about group process for induction discussed and presented publicly?
- Is there a leadership statement on hazing and is it clear and accessible?
- Is information about hazing and its prevention available or easily accessible?
- Are hazing policies and reporting procedures easily accessible and do they convey clarity and consistency of information, processes, and consequences for hazing?
- Does the organization openly inform community members about hazing investigations and incidents?\*
- Is information on hazing presented to members/students at orientations, college residential assistant trainings, etc.?
- Is information on hazing presented to community members (alumni, parents, local organizations, and schools)?
- Does the organization provide training programs for group staff and leadership?
- Does the organization have a committee, task force, or group established to coordinate hazing prevention efforts?

## STAGE 2

**Interpret behavior as a problem.** As depicted in *We Don't Haze*, at its most extreme, hazing causes death and sometimes extreme physical injury. Even supposedly subtle forms of hazing can cause psychological and emotional scars, many of which can be hidden or difficult to share openly with others. Other consequences of hazing include damaged relationships, anger, resentment, mistrust, and unnecessary stress. Hazing can interfere with one's personal growth and self-esteem, positive learning and social interaction, and can diminish the potential benefits of participating in a group.

On a larger scale, hazing contributes to unsafe environments in schools, campuses, and organizations. Further, individuals as well as organizations can lose precious time and resources responding to hazing incidents through investigations, lawsuits, and ultimately having to pay civil and/or criminal penalties. Hazing can affect how students learn, grow and interact as human beings. As such, it is a problem for individuals, groups, organizations and communities, and at the broadest level, for society as a whole.

## STAGE 3

**Recognize one's responsibility to intervene.** Individuals who are directly involved in hazing as well as those indirectly involved have a responsibility to intervene. Taking responsibility to intervene in hazing involves shifting your attitude about where your responsibilities lie, not just for yourself and your own wellbeing, but also relative to other individuals, to a particular group (with which you may or may not be involved), and to your community.

You may think it's not your place to intervene in hazing if it doesn't directly involve or affect you in an immediate way -- as in, "That's not really my business" or "I sure hope *someone* does something to make sure that doesn't happen again." Or you may think there isn't anything you can do to actually make a difference to prevent hazing. These attitudes, as well as concerns you or others might have about potentially negative consequences of intervening, are recurring barriers to bystander intervention that we can challenge by thinking about hazing as a community issue.

When we expand our understanding of the **problem** of hazing to include the larger community -- and not just a select group of individuals -- we also expand the possibilities for **solutions** to the problem. When we stop addressing hazing as the exclusive responsibility of the people who haze or are hazed, then regardless of the setting or people involved, everyone in the surrounding community has a role to play in

the solution to this problem. In the case of hazing, the surrounding community includes those who participate in the school or campus environment, but also the residents or members of the broader community or town, as well as family and friends who may be miles away but still have knowledge or concerns about potential hazing.

It takes awareness of those around you, and tremendous courage to believe that you can make a difference to change the culture of hazing in a group or organization. But in the interest of ensuring we can live in communities shaped by mutual respect and safety, each of us can play a part in putting a stop to hazing. **The solution to the problem of hazing includes YOU.**

## STAGE FOUR

**Develop skills needed to intervene safely.** Bystander intervention training programs build skills and confidence around the following three methods of effective intervention: **confrontation, shifting the focus, and shifting attitudes.**

**Confrontation** includes steps that engage people in thinking more critically about hazing. For example, you could:

- Express concern and caring about a person and what is happening.
- Talk about the specifics of why you are concerned.
- Describe how what is happening makes you or others feel.
- Ask the other person if they understand your point of view.
- Brainstorm with the other person about what can be done.
- Offer support and encouragement for change.
- Agree on a plan for follow-up (Berkowitz, 2009, pp. 42-44).

**Shifting the focus** includes steps that allow you or others to disengage from hazing. For example, you could:

- If a person engages you to participate in hazing, find a way to ignore, not engage, or show that you will not participate.
- If a person persists in urging you to participate in hazing, shift attention away: change the subject and talk about something else to convey that you are not interested or available.
- When hazing comes up, reframe or revise a remark or behavior and shift attention towards positive alternatives to hazing.

**Shifting attitudes** is a long-term process that usually takes place through extended discussion, trainings, or as part of a consequence for engagement in hazing (e.g., as

part of a hazing incident investigation or repercussions of involvement in hazing). This includes actions and activities that:

- Increase awareness of hazing.
- Facilitate a change in a person or group's attitudes about and emotional and cognitive perceptions of hazing.
- Instigate a change in an offending person or group's understanding about why hazing and their specific behavior is problematic.
- Instigate discussion about positive values and approaches to group bonding that are alternatives to hazing.

**Bystander intervention is more effective when it includes:**

- **Having a relationship of some kind (even temporary) with the person(s) you are confronting.** It is easier and more effective to build on a prior connection or relationship with a person or group you are trying to confront.
- **Being specific about what needs to be changed or improved.** Pointing to specific behaviors that are problematic and can be changed is more effective than vague, overarching, or general comments and criticisms about hazing.
- **Being involved in the situation in some way.** You are on more solid ground when you let people know how you are involved and that the situation matters to you.
- **Willing to help the person (or group) understand the effect of their behavior on you and/or others.** Show that you are willing and able to be a part of the solution (Berkowitz, 2009).

**It takes thoughtful intention and care to engage in bystander intervention in ways that are safe and that promote the mutual respect we all need as members of a group or community.** According to Berkowitz (2009), the following are important steps for being safe and respectful:

- **Take care of yourself:** Be sure you are safe; get support from your peers or from adults as needed; and find another person to be an ally with you.
- **Give respect** to the other person(s) by listening to what they have to say openly and honestly.
- **Listen for underlying issues:** Abusive behavior is sometimes a sign that a person is hurting inside.

- **Notice what increases or decreases defensiveness:** Pay attention to responses that convey openness and willingness to listen and those that show resistance to what you are saying or doing
- **Communicate in ways that decrease defensiveness:** Decreasing defensiveness can help others be more open to gaining understanding and insight that will help them shift their attitudes and behavior.
- **Engage in “open talk:”** Use a conversational style that emphasizes genuine interest and openness and conveys mutual respect and understanding.

## STAGE FIVE

**Take action.** What types of actions can you take? Bystanders can intervene **directly** in an actual hazing situation AND **indirectly** by working to disrupt attitudes, behaviors, and dynamics characteristic of a hazing culture.

**Direct intervention** interrupts or prevents hazing from happening, including actions that:

- Let others know that **you do not intend to participate** in hazing when it is taking place or could take place
- **Encourage others not to participate** in hazing
- **Discourage others who are hazing** from continuing with what they are doing.
- **Pose alternatives to hazing** when members of a group are planning induction processes

**Indirect intervention** instigates changes in the values, beliefs, expectations, rules, and regulations related to group induction and hazing, and takes place through one-on-one and group conversations, trainings, and other group or organizational processes, including actions that:

- Increase discussion about hazing and expand awareness so that more people notice hazing when it happens.
- Change people’s understanding of hazing as a problem.
- Improve awareness of hazing policies so that more people understand expectations and consequences for individuals who haze.
- Educate about hazing prevention and what individuals can do to address the problem of hazing.
- Support people who experience hazing by talking with them about what happened and connecting them to people who can help.

- Support others who want to prevent hazing by joining with them to find solutions.

### **Get informed about hazing in a group or organization**

- What state laws (if any) govern hazing where the group or organization is located?
- What is the group or organization's policy on hazing?
- What procedures are in place for reporting hazing in the group or organization? Is reporting done anonymously, online, in person, or by other means?
- Who should hazing be reported to?
- What is the process and for investigating an incident of hazing and who is responsible for overseeing this process?
- Does the group or organization have a committee or office responsible for addressing prevention, wellness, or hazing in particular and what has been done thus far?
- How can you, your friends, and loved ones be involved in hazing prevention within this group or organization?

Depending on your role as a community member you may feel ambivalent about your role in changing hazing policy, procedures, or practices within a group or organization. However, **you can exercise your power to ask questions of those who do hold the authority to change policy.** As a parent, friend, and community member, YOU can help shift hazing cultures and prevent hazing by taking action in some of the following ways:

- Learn about how hazing is handled in the groups, organizations, and institutions of which you and your loved ones are a part.
- Become more aware of hazing warning signs and know where to report concerns.
- Seek opportunities to enhance your understanding of hazing and share your knowledge with others.
- Help to organize opportunities for sharing facts and experiences about hazing through newsletters, presentations, Op-Eds, school, church, and community bulletin boards, websites, social media, and other forums for communication.
- Talk with your children and their friends about hazing – help them build skills to intervene and to be part of prevention solutions by developing alternatives to hazing.

- Ask school and college administrators, school boards, coaches, and others to communicate with you about what they are doing to prevent hazing.

Like hazing itself, hazing prevention and bystander intervention take place along a continuum. Substantial change of the systems that support hazing -- through changes in laws, policies, procedures for reporting and responding to hazing, and societal values about hazing as a part of group bonding -- are all long-term goals, and not everyone can engage at that level or is in a position to begin with this high level of prevention. Because it takes a long time and involves smaller groups of individuals with the authority to instigate high-level change, this type of prevention is only one among many options. We also need approaches that take place in the short term and in which anyone, regardless of their role or position, can engage.

Having a conversation with friends, parents, or colleagues about hazing is one of the most essential and powerful starting points for hazing prevention, and *anyone* can partake in this type of action. In fact, **until more people start having these conversations in all types of settings, it is unlikely that actual change will be possible in our laws and societal expectations.**

So, don't hesitate to be involved in hazing prevention. Start where you are. Increase your own understanding of hazing. Build your awareness of hazing in your group or community. Ask questions. Begin a conversation about hazing with your peers and create opportunities for ongoing dialogue.

#### **Promoting alternatives to hazing**

Examples of team or group-building traditions that could contribute to positive relationship and group unity without hazing include:

- Attending a movie or concert together.
- Mentoring.
- Group outings or activities like bowling or sharing a meal.
- Ropes courses and problem solving games with trained professional guidance and supervision.
- Leadership training that focuses on ethical leadership and positive group bonding.
- Service projects that involve the whole team or membership (not just the new members).
- Physical "challenge by choice" activities, organized and facilitated by trained staff.
- Attending a campus or community event together.



In addition to education and intervention, hazing prevention is also about promoting activities that are alternatives to hazing. Building group bonds and unity is important and can have a positive impact when there are equal power dynamics and everyone is empowered to contribute to the group. So how should groups and organizations build unity, create a sense of belonging, and connect in meaningful ways with peers in group settings without hazing? Individuals and groups committed to finding alternatives to hazing often need help identifying positive ways to build groups bonds.

You can begin by asking about the values and characteristics that group members want to cultivate. For instance, if you want to be a part of an organization in which everyone has a voice in defining the purpose of the group, what types of activities allow everyone to express themselves and have a role in the group? If leadership and community service are important group goals, what activities allow members to work together in teams to build unity around that common purpose? Clarifying group goals and values, and identifying activities that promote and express those goals and values is a critical step.

## Next Steps for “We Don’t Haze”

The objective of this companion brief is to deepen understanding of *We Don’t Haze* by providing a basic background in hazing and hazing prevention. How can you use the film and the information we have provided to address hazing in your or your loved one’s group, organization, or community?

Finding ways to help others – especially those at risk for hazing – is essential. Conversations about hazing broaden understanding and are also an opportunity to explore motivations for participating in and maintaining hazing traditions. Establishing trust and a non-judgmental atmosphere through open inquiry and dialogue are paramount for honest conversations about hazing.

As individuals gain more clarity about hazing, common motivations for participation in hazing, and common beliefs about how hazing helps to achieve group goals, they will be in a better position to be a part of the solution to the problem of hazing. Reflecting on the extent to which hazing aligns with one’s values, the values and purpose of groups to which one belongs, the mission of an organization, or the values of one’s community is a valuable step in this process. Once the motivations and goals for hazing are made explicit, brainstorming non-hazing strategies for achieving the same goals becomes possible. In the process, members of the group or community can discuss relative merits of each proposed strategy and their feasibility.

**The creation of living and learning environments free of hazing and other forms of interpersonal violence is the ultimate goal.** This vision requires a cultural shift that moves beyond intervention and towards shaping communities where healthy group bonding and traditions are the norm and where civility, honor, respect, and nonviolence are cornerstones of group decision-making, participation and leadership.

The urgency to address hazing, so powerfully captured by parents, brothers, students, and scholars presented in *We Don’t Haze*, means that wherever you are in the process of building your awareness of hazing, the time is NOW to play your part in ensuring that you, your peers, and other members of your group, organization or community can participate in living and learning environments that are free of hazing.

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## **Additional Resources**

### **Hazing Information:**

StopHazing:

<http://www.stophazing.org>

Hazing in View: Quick Facts:

<http://www.stophazing.org/hazing-in-view-quick-facts/>

HazingPrevention.Org:

<http://hazingprevention.org>

Hank Nuwer's Hazing Blog:

<http://www.hanknuwer.com/hazing-blog/>

### **Research and Assessment:**

StopHazing Research and Prevention Consulting Services:

<http://www.stophazing.org/about/services/>

Hazing In View: College Students at Risk:

[http://www.stophazing.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/hazing\\_in\\_view\\_web1.pdf](http://www.stophazing.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/hazing_in_view_web1.pdf)

### **Prevention:**

Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF):

<http://www.samhsa.gov/spf>

Connecting The Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence:

[http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/connecting\\_the\\_dots-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/connecting_the_dots-a.pdf)

What Works in Prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs:

[http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/cms/pdf/hazing/upload/AmPsy\\_WhatWorksInPrevention\\_6-7-2003.pdf](http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/cms/pdf/hazing/upload/AmPsy_WhatWorksInPrevention_6-7-2003.pdf)

Strategic Planning for Prevention Professionals on Campus:

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/hec/product/strategic-planning.pdf>

Prevention Innovations Research Center:

<http://cola.unh.edu/prevention-innovations-research-center>

### **Bystander Intervention / Social Norms:**

Alan Berkowitz-Response Ability:

<http://www.raproject.org>

Alan Berkowitz-Fostering Healthy Norms to Prevent Violence and Abuse:

<http://www.alanberkowitz.com/articles/Preventing%20Sexual%20Violence%20Chapter%20-%20Revision.pdf>

A Grassroots' Guide to Fostering Healthy Norms to Reduce Violence in our Communities:

[http://www.alanberkowitz.com/Social\\_Norms\\_Violence\\_Prevention\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.alanberkowitz.com/Social_Norms_Violence_Prevention_Toolkit.pdf)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center-Bystander Intervention Resources:

<http://www.nsvrc.org/projects/engaging-bystanders-sexual-violence-prevention/bystander-intervention-resources>

Lessons Learned from Bystander Intervention Prevention in Ending Sexual and Relationship Violence and Stalking: Translations For Hazing Prevention:

<http://www.stophazing.org/lessons-learned-from-bystander-intervention-prevention/>