



National Collaborative

FOR HAZING RESEARCH AND PREVENTION

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

National Agenda for Hazing Prevention in Education

November 2010

Introduction

Alcohol consumption, humiliation, isolation, sleep deprivation, and sex acts are common hazing practices. In the fall of 2008, six college student deaths were linked to hazing. Although stereotypes often shape perceptions of hazing as a problem only for college athletes and fraternity members, hazing is not limited to these groups. Research findings, news accounts, and hundreds of personal experiences shared with StopHazing.org tell us that hazing also affects individuals in middle school, high school, community organizations, the military and sports at nearly all levels. Even when the consequences of hazing are not lethal, emotional and physical harm are well-documented outcomes.

Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that has potential to humiliate, degrade, abuse, or endanger a person regardless of that person's willingness to participate. Frequently, hazing is undetected, dismissed, or minimized as harmless antics and pranks. These views are shortsighted and dangerous, as hazing is a type of abusive, and often violent, behavior that can threaten the health and safety of those involved.

In 2008, a national study conducted by researchers at the University of Maine found:

- 55% of college students involved in clubs, teams, and other extra-curricular organizations are hazed.
- 47% of students experienced hazing in high school.
- Hazing occurs in a range of student activities and teams and includes behaviors that are abusive, dangerous, and often illegal.
- The vast majority of college students do not report hazing to campus officials.
- College students recognize hazing as part of campus culture.
- Nine out of ten students who experience hazing in college do not consider themselves to have been hazed.

Several studies have explored attitudes and beliefs about hazing. Taken together, this research reveals a complex set of sometimes conflicting motives and emotions, which often work against the reporting of hazing incidents and support the perpetuation of this behavior. For example, research reveals that many students disapprove of hazing, but also accept hazing as an expected part of joining a group or team (Hoover & Pollard, 1999; 2000; Sweet, 1999; Allan & Madden, 2008; Lee-Olukoya, 2009). While many individuals report experiencing negative consequences of hazing, they also may think of it as necessary or helpful in gaining acceptance to a peer group (Allan & Madden, 2008). Hazing is often justified as a means of promoting group unity, but emerging research with college athletes has found that hazing is associated with reduced, rather than greater, team cohesiveness (Van Raalte et al., 2007).

At this point in time, there is substantial evidence of pervasive and persistent hazing and its negative consequences. The next steps are to use the existing research about the factors that lead to hazing to inform the design of hazing prevention efforts, to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts, and to use those results for improvement. These programs can also draw from the substantial research literature on the prevention of other health and safety risks. Many more individuals than in the past now accept the dangers of hazing and are poised to take preventative action, but these efforts must continue to be guided by research. Conditions are right for the advancement of a National Agenda for Hazing Prevention.

Purpose

This National Agenda serves as a call to action to:

- Draw attention to the research about hazing, including its health and safety risks.
- Advance and promote research-based hazing prevention efforts.
- Coalesce individual and group efforts into a cohesive response to hazing.
- Marshal and maximize resources to support and advance hazing research and prevention.

Background

In October 2009, the University of Maine's National Collaborative for Hazing Research and Prevention and Hazing Prevention.org teamed up to host the National Hazing Symposium, bringing together 54 individuals to begin a discussion of next steps in advancing hazing prevention. These individuals included researchers, college student affairs professionals, teachers, administrators, advocates, and community members. The Symposium spanned two days. Participants reviewed the state of knowledge in the field with the goal of developing a shared agenda to help guide future hazing prevention efforts at a national level. While acknowledging the discussion would likely generate specific ideas for local programming, the meeting facilitators emphasized that the main purpose was to further hazing prevention nationally, using this guiding question: What do we know from research that can advance hazing prevention efforts across the U.S.?

A panel of researchers provided participants with an in-depth review of the research to date about hazing. Further, lessons from prevention science were reviewed. In general, more effective prevention efforts are informed by research and involve a comprehensive approach, including multiple and sustained components that are coordinated, synergistic, collaborative, and evaluated. An effective planning process involves (1) identifying the factors that contribute to hazing, both risk factors that

increase the likelihood of hazing and protective factors that can buffer against risk; (2) envisioning how those risk and protective factors combine to lead to hazing behavior and determining which factors are modifiable; and (3) creating programs, policies, and services to change these specific, research-based risk and protective factors. A link to the summary of a comprehensive and research-based approach to prevention that may be applied to hazing can be found at <http://www.higheredcenter.org/high-risk/violence/hazing>.

Participants, working in small groups, were provided with written summaries of the research findings on hazing and asked to use this information and the background on effective prevention when responding to a series of discussion questions about what we know about hazing, what needs to change, and what actions are needed. Ideas were summarized, fed back to the groups and discussed again. A volunteer assigned to each small group recorded all ideas and discussions generated by the groups. Based on their experience, Symposium participants believed these action steps held the potential to contribute to hazing prevention in a variety of contexts, while recognizing that they would need to be tested for effectiveness.

Following the Symposium, Drs. Elizabeth Allan and Mary Madden organized participants' ideas. Specific ideas generated by Symposium participants, some of which were programmatic in nature, were distilled into change-focused objectives that would move the field of hazing prevention forward at a national level. Participants' contributions were also used to inform the next steps outlined on page 5. The Symposium agenda and the original action steps generated by Symposium participants can be found at <http://www.hazingstudy.org>.

Goals and Objectives

The Agenda goals and objectives are intended as a guiding framework and a national call to action for hazing prevention in education settings. While Symposium participants were primarily connected to postsecondary education, the goals and objectives of this Agenda are written broadly, with the potential to apply to other contexts in which hazing occurs.

We hope these goals and objectives serve as a catalyst for dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders, including those representing other age groups and settings. We expect the Agenda to evolve in accordance with new research and expanded involvement among multiple constituencies.

Goal #1: Increase extent to which hazing is considered a priority health and safety issue.

- Increase public recognition that hazing threatens the physical, emotional, and psychological health and safety of individuals.
- Increase understanding that hazing is preventable.
- Increase public knowledge of anti-hazing laws and related penalties.
- Increase access to information about hazing and its prevention.
- Create communications campaigns to disseminate existing positive (anti-hazing) social norms.
- Increase public critiques of the normalization and minimization of hazing in the media.
- Increase the number and types of national associations, agencies, and other organizations that take a public stand against hazing and make hazing prevention a priority.

Goal #2: Advance research about hazing and its prevention.

- Increase available funding for research about hazing.
- Increase the number of funded research proposals.
- Increase and centralize data collection of documented hazing behaviors.
- Increase and centralize data collection related to current prevention efforts.
- Increase the number of studies that contribute to knowledge about hazing and its prevention.

Goal #3: Increase available evidence about effective hazing prevention.

- Increase collaboration between researchers, universities, and professional organizations to further the development and evaluation of prevention strategies targeted toward postsecondary schools.
- Increase collaboration between schools, researchers, and professional organizations to develop evidence-based prevention strategies targeted toward primary and secondary educational settings.
- Develop a menu of evidence-based *prevention* strategies that can be employed as part of a comprehensive approach and tailored to specific contexts in education settings.
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Goal #4: Build campus, school, and community capacity to develop hazing-free environments.

- Increase student leadership development for hazing prevention, including understanding of hazing dynamics, ethical decision-making, group dynamics, bystander intervention, and other prevention approaches.
- Increase professional development for hazing prevention in primary, secondary, and postsecondary settings, including knowledge of effective prevention principles and planning processes.
- Increase the coverage of hazing and its prevention in relevant curricula for those preparing to work in education settings.
- Increase interdisciplinary collaborations to further develop knowledge related to capacity building around hazing and its prevention.

Next Steps

It is our hope that national and international attention and action to prevent hazing grows from this Agenda. Individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions all have important roles to play in achieving the goals set forth.

For example:

- National organizations and associations can prioritize funding and support for research about hazing and its prevention.
- Researchers can investigate questions related to understanding hazing and effective hazing prevention.
- National organizations and associations can examine hazing policies and make recommendations for improvement in light of existing research.
- Policy-makers and legislators can examine and strengthen existing anti-hazing statutes.
- Consumers can refuse to buy products that trivialize hazing in their marketing and let companies know of their decisions.
- Practitioners can use existing research to develop more effective interventions and partner with researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts.
- Professional associations can sponsor meetings and conferences where participants learn about effective hazing prevention.
- Organizations can fund programs and workshops for information sharing related to hazing research and principles of effective prevention.

Summary

Hazing is a threat to the health and safety of students and an impediment to positive educational climates in our schools, colleges, and universities. This National Agenda serves as a call to action for U.S.-based education leaders, teachers, students and their families to learn about the dynamics of hazing and to actively support its prevention through research, information sharing, and the development and implementation of evidence-based strategies for prevention. We also hope it will serve as a catalyst for dialogue and collaboration with other stakeholders committed to promoting safe and healthy educational environments.

Transforming the environments in which hazing occurs will not happen overnight. However, work on other health and safety issues suggests it can be done through a combination of commitment, and research-based efforts. Given the vast numbers of students affected by hazing and the emotional and physical harm it can cause, it is critical to use the information we have available to improve our prevention efforts and advance the field as a whole.

For more information about how to advance hazing prevention in your community and nationally, please contact <http://www.hazingstudy.org>, <http://www.HazingPrevention.org>, or <http://www.StopHazing.org>.

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