



Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Newsletter



Hazing Prevention Top Agenda Item as New School Year Begins

By: Dr. Karissa Niehoff – NFHS, CEO

If we needed evidence on a larger scale about the potential devastating effects of hazing within the athletics setting, the recent events at Northwestern University should cause all high school leaders to stand up and take notice.

What seems like innocent fun at first – making freshmen handle the unpleasant chores as an example – can sometimes spiral out of control and lead to loss of jobs for coaches, shattered lives for students and parents, and shame for the community at large.

Year after year, events such as the football hazing scandal that jolted the Northwestern campus continue to occur – at the high school and college levels. Although we are shocked, distraught, disappointed, discouraged and downright angry, progress over time seems limited at best.

As middle schools and high schools begin classes, and as fall sports teams hit the practice fields, this is another chance – the next chance – for coaches and administrators to do what is right. Bringing a halt to longstanding rituals may not be a popular decision in some settings, but in most cases, it is the BEST decision for the health and well-being of the students.

BEFORE the season starts is the time to lay down the ground rules, share the expected behavior and make it clear that every person is to be valued and that hazing will not be tolerated.

By definition, hazing is any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of a student to belong to a group, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. Any kind of initiation expectations should never be part of high

**SAFETY
TOLERANCE
ACCEPTANCE
RESPECT**



**SEGURIDAD
TOLERANCIA
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RESPECTO**



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Over the past two years, a number of horrific hazing incidents have occurred during the first month of the school year. Last year, in the month of August alone, there were five highly publicized incidents across the country – one of which forced cancellation of a school’s entire football season.

Now is the time to change. Establishing an anti-hazing culture is the first step as the new school year begins. And that culture may need to include a different plan for welcoming new members. Inclusion must be accomplished without a “requirement” for being a part of the team.

To build a positive school culture, coaches and athletic directors must take proactive steps. School leaders must supervise student-athletes and make it clear to every student that hazing will not be tolerated. An anti-hazing policy must be developed, and it should be presented to every student and parent in advance of every sport season. The policy should be simple – no tolerance for hazing of any kind.

A tremendous resource to help in establishing a positive school culture is the online education course, “Bullying, Hazing and Inappropriate Behaviors,” which is available through the NFHS Learning Center at www.NFHSLearn.com. This course educates coaches about their legal responsibilities to provide a safe and respectful environment for the students in their care.

In addition, “Hazing Prevention for Students” is a free course designed to teach students how to identify hazing, when to step in, and why they should notify proper authorities.

The NFHS also offers a number of resources on hazing prevention for school staff, students and parents on its website at <https://www.nfhs.org/resources/student-services-inclusion/hazing>.

In an opinion piece on MSNBC.com, Elizabeth Allan, a professor of higher education at the University of Maine, had the following to say about the importance of hazing prevention in high school athletics programs:

“If we value the well-being of children and young adults in our lives, then hazing has no place in our athletic programs, schools, campuses and communities.

“Hazing prevention is not only about eliminating harm and senseless suffering, but it’s also about *gaining something*. In the absence of hazing, we can build stronger and healthier groups, more ethical and caring leaders, and more inclusive communities that support student mental health and well-being. The alarming reports of hazing at Northwestern are a clarion call for prevention and, with that, an opportunity for each of us to transform the hazing culture and create safer schools and campuses for our students.”





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Additional Resources for Hazing Prevention

In addition to outstanding educational content, www.HazingPrevention.Org has gathered resources to help professionals put hazing prevention into everyday practice. Check out our curated list below. Use these resources to host a hazing prevention event, educate yourself, or spark a conversation with your group.

Online Education

Through a partnership with AliveTek, Hazing Prevention Network provides a wealth of online courses designed for professionals, students, athletes and others.

Check out these courses and [team-building activities](#) at [Prevent.Zone](#).

In-Person Team-Building Activities

- [5 team-building Activities for Teens to Build Trust and Cooperation](#)
- [30 activities to foster team spirit and trust](#)
- [Teampedia, a wiki made just for team building](#)

Wrapping up

Hazing is any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.

As a part of your hazing prevention journey, we encourage you to scroll down and Take the Pledge! In doing so, you make a commitment to raise awareness of hazing activities in your environment, take notice when a fellow or sister student is experiencing hazing, and don't be afraid to say something! When we work as a team and empower each other, we truly do become **#STRONGERTOGETHER!**

Take the Hazing Prevention Pledge:

I PLEDGE: to prevent hazing before it occurs, stop hazing when I see it happening, report it when I know it has transpired, and help empower others to do the same in their organizations, schools and communities.

I JOIN OTHERS TO:

- **Recognize the harm that hazing can cause both physically and psychologically;**
- **Condemn the act of hazing on all levels;**
- **Admonish those who haze and those who enable hazing through their silence, and; Be an advocate for the prevention of hazing**

We want to end by thanking you all for doing what you do. Being an AD is not an easy job! You are doing a great service to your students, your school, your community, and this does not go unnoticed. Athletics is a huge part of the high school experience, and the culture of the schools we all love. Your student-athletes and their parents notice all your hard work and truly appreciate all that you do for them to enjoy playing sports and that's all that really matters. © Copyright Hazing Prevention Network



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S.T.A.R. School Application Available

To meet the S.T.A.R. school standards set by the OSAA, a school must implement event management strategies with the intention of providing the safest and most welcoming environment to all who attend OSAA sanctioned events. If there is a discriminatory incident that occurs, the school must also have a plan prepared for how to both interrupt the behaviors that occur, as well as follow through with all who are involved. The application process asks school administrators to reflect on current practices for event management as well as assess areas where improvements can be made to create the best environment for all to thrive. S.T.A.R. Schools will be indicated by a S.T.A.R. logo on their school's page on the OSAA website. Those schools who qualify will also earn 100 OSAA Cup points. The OSAA plans to provide a banner for official S.T.A.R. Schools beginning the 2022-23 Association Year as well.

S.T.A.R schools will also receive \$1,000 from the OSAA Foundation Equity and Diversity Fund to support ongoing trainings and education along with a banner representing they are a S.T.A.R school. [S.T.A.R. School Application](#)

Training and Resources

OSAA Racial Equity Trainings

- ⇒ **2023 Interrupting and Preventing Discriminatory Acts Continued Education:** [PPT](#) | [PDF](#)
- ⇒ [OSAA Racial Equity in School Athletics and Activities Training](#)
- ⇒ [Racial Equity Training Memo - Sept. 16, 2020](#)
- ⇒ [List of online training course completions](#)

(This link is only viewable by OSAA website user accounts with administrative access to a member school.)

Contact the OSAA

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