

STUDENT ORGANIZATION ADVISOR HAZING PREVENTION TOOLKIT

Student organization advisors are the first people outside the organization membership that many student leaders will talk to about possible hazing. This toolkit includes tools to help advisors recognize hazing, empower students to change behavior, understand their responsibilities as an advisor, and offer resources for reporting and support. Any questions about this guide can be directed to the UT Austin Wellness Network Hazing Prevention and Education Committee at hazingprevention@austin.utexas.edu.

WHAT IS HAZING?



Hazing, as defined in The University of Texas at Austin **Prohibition of Hazing**, means any intentional, knowing, or reckless act, occurring on or off of the campus of an educational institution, by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a person, for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization.

- Hazing can happen in any club or student organization, including athletic teams, ROTC/military associations, performing arts groups, faith-based organizations, sorority and fraternity organizations, and student government to name a few.
- Under state law and university policy, the fact that a person consents to be hazed is not a defense. The peer pressure and desire to belong in a student organization can create a coercive environment where true consent cannot be given.
- In general, behaviors that are considered hazing adversely affect the mental or physical health or safety of the person and span a spectrum. A list of examples of hazing behaviors can be found in the **Prohibition of Hazing**.
- Ultimately, hazing takes place in environments where power dynamics within a student organization are emphasized.

To learn more about what hazing is, watch this **short video** created by UT students.

STATE LAW

Hazing is prohibited under state law and university policy. To learn more about how the state defines and prosecutes hazing, visit hazing.utexas.edu.

RECOGNIZING HAZING

While the definition of hazing provides context, sometimes having the confidence to recognize hazing when it is being planned or taking place can be challenging. There are some patterns that can help you as a student organization advisor to recognize hazing in order to prevent it from taking place. The first step in preventing, interrupting or reporting hazing is to recognize it.

Consider paying close attention and asking thoughtful questions of your student leaders at these times:

- The first six weeks of the semester, when students are joining organizations,
- Breaks from class and holidays (spring break, etc.),
- Student organization or new member retreats (on or off campus),
- Overnight events,
- Sports tournaments,
- Road trips,
- New member meetings (planned or informal gatherings),
- Initiation week events, and
- Big Sibling/Little Sibling reveals.

Advisors should also know the warning signs that hazing may be taking place. Examples include:

- Changes in behavior and communication,
- Disrupted patterns of behavior, such as not attending classes, changes in grades, becoming difficult to reach, changes in personal hygiene, clothing, etc.,
- Chronic fatigue,
- Symptoms of depression,
- Unusual physical injuries, and
- Being dismissive of concerns expressed by friends, family, etc., about changes in behavior.*

If you are unsure if something may or may not be hazing, ask yourself:

- Could this activity endanger the mental, physical health or safety of a student?
- Is the organization expecting or encouraging students to participate in the activity in order to join or maintain membership?
- Are members intimidating or harassing others?
- Are all members in the group participating equally in the activity?
- Do the activities in question support the values of the organization?

EMPOWERING STUDENTS

Another critical component of being a student organization advisor is empowering and supporting students to be ethical leaders of values-based student organizations. In order to get to a place of empowering leaders, advisors must first be “in the loop.” This means digging in to challenging conversations with students and providing support and guidance around events in advance to prevent possible hazing or other problematic behaviors



How can you be more “in the loop” with your students?

Consider how you are framing the conversation with your students. Students are often told what not to do, instead of being given options that might be better.

- Helpful: “We can achieve a stronger sense of connection among our members by _____”
- Less Helpful: “If you mess up by hazing these members, then _____ is going to happen to you”

Remember to assure students that you are there to ultimately protect them and the organization.

- Ask thoughtful questions to better understand the details of what is happening at events.
 - What time does the event start and end? Is it an overnight event?
 - Where is the location?
 - What are the driving/transportation arrangements?
 - What is the goal of the event/activity?
 - Are there any elements of surprise? What are those?
 - Who is required to attend/participate? (*If it's not everyone – why?*)
 - What is happening before/after the event?
- Empower students to lead in alignment with their organizations' values and to challenge unhealthy traditions or norms. Consider having conversations such as:
 - How does this support or contradict your stated values as an organization?
 - Just because we have “always” done this, who is it serving and should we continue it?
 - Based off what your organization is doing now, are you setting the organization up for success in the long-term?
 - How can I support you in getting buy-in or explaining these changes to the members?

These can be challenging conversations that need to happen regularly, and sometimes students may need to hear the same message from someone else. Consider how you can point your students towards resources to make change within their organization.

YOUR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Ultimately your responsibility as an advisor is to mentor, support, and coach your students AND to look out for your students' safety and wellbeing. There are many approaches to addressing safety and wellbeing with student organizations, including:

- Advocating for ongoing prevention-based education.
- Following safety policies applicable to student organizations.
- Knowing about campus resources and reporting concerns.

Prevention Education

Student organizations **can request** a tailored workshop on hazing prevention, or an individual consultation. Remind your student organizations they are required to complete **Safety Education** each fall, including presenting the content back to their entire membership.

Policies

Familiarize yourself with the **Prohibition of Hazing** and **Texas state law**. Beyond the definition of hazing, these policies outline individual and organization discipline, reporting obligations, and immunity. If you have any questions about hazing policies, reach out to **Student Conduct and Academic Integrity**.

Reporting

There is no such thing as harmless hazing. Holding groups and individuals accountable is a part of changing the culture of hazing. Do not assume someone else has submitted a report.

- **To report hazing:**
 - Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger.
 - **Report online.**
 - Call the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line (BCCAL) at 512-232-5050.
- It is possible to report hazing anonymously.

Hazing can have long-term impacts on students, both physically and emotionally. As an advisor, if you know students that have experienced hazing, continue to offer guidance and encourage them to use on-campus resources available for support.

