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Checklist  
Inside

## When Rituals Go Wrong: How School Districts Can Prevent and Respond to Hazing

A high school locker room full of JV football team players was unsupervised for 25 minutes because the school coaches were all late to their jobs. During that 25-minute period, four players allegedly sexually assaulted teammates with a broomstick. Instead of informing the police upon learning of the incident, school officials launched their own investigation. The fallout from this incident resulted in the resignation of the principal, replacement of the athletic director, replacement of the entire JV coaching staff, and one JV coach being placed on administrative leave. Criminal charges are pending against the students involved.<sup>1</sup>

This scenario is but one example of a disturbing uptick of public school “hazing” incidents in recent

years. Hazing is understood as unique from bullying and is typically associated with students willingly or unwillingly participating in a humiliating or dangerous activity in order to belong to or join a group. A simple internet search of newspaper articles with the tag “hazing” will uncover ongoing hazing case investigations in Arkansas<sup>2</sup>, Ohio<sup>3</sup>, Arizona<sup>4</sup>, Texas<sup>5</sup>,

2 “Arkansas high school baseball player pleads no contest in hazing case,” USA Today, July 13, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/arkansas-high-school-baseball-player-pleads-no-contest-hazing>.

3 “Police investigating hazing allegations from Ohio high school football camp,” USA Today, June 28, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/ohio-football-hazing-cleveland-police-investigation>.

4 “Arizona HS football team investigated for apparent hazing,” USA Today, June 14, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/safford-high-school-football-investigated-apparent-hazing>.

5 “Two Texas high school coaches arrested for not reporting hazing allegations,” USA Today, May 15, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/two-texas-high-school-coaches-arrested-for-not-reporting-hazing-allegations>.

1 “Damascus high school football locker room was unsupervised in alleged broomstick sexual assault,” USA Today, May 15, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/damascus-hs-football-locker-room-unsupervised-alleged-broomstick-sexual-assault>.

## Fast Facts: K-12 Hazing Happens

**47%** Students hazed before they entered college

**25%** Students hazed before they were 13 years old

**22%** Students indicated a coach or advisor was involved in hazing activities

Source: "Hazing in Public Schools: A Liability Challenge for School Leaders," Essex, Nathan L., *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 87(6), 236-240 (2014).

*"The law . . . can help holding people accountable, it can help to educate people by having a law, but it's not enough. We need to help students learn how to intervene if they are a bystander. A big surprise of our research is that a lot of the hazing is happening in public spaces."*

*-Elizabeth Allan,  
Professor of Higher Education,  
University of Maine*

California<sup>6</sup>, Colorado<sup>7</sup> and Florida<sup>8</sup> in 2019 alone. From a legal standpoint, hazing behavior may trigger school district responsibilities under one or more Federal anti-discrimination laws, might require remediation and further preventative measures, and may even have criminal ramifications requiring notification of law enforcement. In other words, hazing behavior creates highly complicated legal liabilities, which if handled incorrectly, can make a bad situation worse.

Hazing is hardly a new phenomenon, but hazing in K-12 schools has not been in the spotlight until fairly recently. A 2008 seminal survey of undergraduate students regarding college hazing also revealed the pervasiveness of high school hazing – 47% of these college students reported that they experienced hazing in high school.<sup>9</sup> This finding was affirmed by

6 "Lawsuit: Report of hazing incident done by former Dos Pueblos (Calif.) baseball players," USA Today, May 11, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/lawsuit-report-of-hazing-incident-done-by-former-dos-pueblos-calif-baseball-players>.

7 "Colorado baseball team will avoid any charges from alleged hazing incident at tournament," USA Today, March 29, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/colorado-baseball-team-will-avoid-any-charges-from-alleged-hazing-incident-at-tournament>.

8 "Parents of Fla. HS baseball players sue school board over alleged hazing," USA Today, February 4, 2019, available at <https://usatodayhss.com/2019/parents-of-fla-hs-baseball-players-sue-school-board-over-alleged-hazing>.

9 "Hazing in View: College Students at Risk," National Study of Student Hazing, Elizabeth J. Allan, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Mary Madden, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Maine, available at [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).

another study in 2014.<sup>10</sup> Extrapolating these study statistics with current public high school enrollment of approximately 15.1 million<sup>11</sup>, potentially 7 million high school students could be experiencing hazing – which is a staggering number of potential legal liabilities for school districts.

With these sobering statistics as a backdrop, SLRMA seeks to highlight the critical role that school districts play in hazing prevention and education. That's why SLRMA is presenting a new checklist: Hazing Prevention, Early Intervention and Response Self-Audit Checklist and Best Practices. This checklist provides school districts with a roadmap to effectively train students, parents, administrators, faculty, and staff on how to create an anti-hazing culture, identify and stop instances of hazing, and respond to hazing appropriately. Your school district cannot afford to mishandle a hazing incident. So go to SLRMA.org today to download the full checklist.

10 "Hazing in Public Schools: A Liability Challenge for School Leaders," Essex, Nathan L., *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 87(6), 236-240 (2014).

11 According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the fall of 2018 enrollment for U.S. public high schools was expected to be 15.1 million students. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>.

## Recent Updates from the Newsroom Available on SLRMA.org

### Preventing Environmental Health Hazards in Schools

June 12, 2019

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created an extensive environmental health resource geared toward preventing, reducing and resolving common environmental hazards in schools. This resource, *Sensible Steps to Healthier School Environments*, along with the EPA's *Healthy Schools Checklist* assessment, will help school districts monitor and improve environmental health for students and staff. Read through the EPA's resource and use the checklist to get a jump on making your school buildings environmentally safer.

### Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2018

May 16, 2019

In April 2019, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics released their annual report on school crime. This report draws upon data from the perspectives of students, teachers, principals, and the general population concerning victimization, bullying, school conditions, fights, weapons, the presence of security staff at school, and other topics.

### What Weighs on Principals' Minds in 2019

May 16, 2019

Every year, MCH Strategic Data collects confidential responses from principals across the country about their top concerns. Learn what principals think about and are handling school safety, student social-emotional learning and mental health, teacher morale, and more.

### Financial Fraud Prevention Tips for School Districts

May 14, 2019

School districts are not immune from internal fraud and unintentional financial mistakes that can cost a school district dearly. Read this article about important policies and processes in order to minimize the risk of fraudulent activity and financial mishandling.

## Amazon® Echo Plus Give-Away Winners

*Congratulations to our 2019 Give-Away Winners!*

**Groton Area School District** - South Dakota

**Blackhawk Area SEJA #865** - Illinois

**Jackson Elementary** - Montana

**Lane Public School** - Oklahoma

**Northwest Public Schools** - Nebraska

**Waconda USD 272** - Kansas

**Teton County School District** - Wyoming



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## Top Downloads 2019

- 1) McKinney Vento Checklist
- 2) Protecting Students in the Era of #MeToo Checklist
- 3) Federal Commission of School Safety Report
- 4) What Weights on Principals' Minds 2019 Report
- 5) What Do Teachers Want-Survey on Guns in Classrooms

The Mission of the School Leaders Risk Management Association (SLRMA) is to assist public school districts (K-12) with supplemental risk management support. We help you accomplish your own mission of risk avoidance in a number of ways.

- We provide pro-active, timely tools to help prevent unwanted and unwarranted school board legal liability claims.
- We keep members informed of the current legal issues that will likely affect your school district through our work with the Federal Legislation Insurance Committee (FLIC).
- We give members access to special reports featured in our Newsroom. The topics are specific to the School Board Legal Liability school boards face today and will in the future.

Members are equipped with an array of self-audits and checklists to help ensure you are in compliance with the latest requirements and guidelines which govern school boards and school districts. We are a not-for-profit and are governed by a Board of Directors. The Board consists of current Executive Directors of State School Boards Associations.

## Hazing Prevention, Early Intervention and Response Self-Audit Checklist and Best Practices for School Districts

<b>I. Does your school district foster an anti-hazing culture by (i) creating well-publicized, written policies and procedures regarding hazing; (ii) setting behavioral expectations for students, faculty, and staff (including coaches); and (iii) promoting positive methods of team building?</b>		
<b><i>Policies and Procedures</i></b>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
➤ Created through a collaborative process involving input from various stakeholders – not only students, parents, and faculty/staff, but also volunteers, coaches, and advisors for extracurricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Explicitly defines and prohibits hazing (although the policy itself may be titled “anti-bullying”, “anti-harassment”, or the like) and provides a non-exhaustive list of examples of what may constitute hazing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Explicitly covers conduct that occurs on campus, at school-sponsored activities, or through school-owned technology, as well as conduct that occurs outside the school environment but creates a significant disruption to the school environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Outlines procedures for reporting incidents of hazing (including anonymous reporting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Identifies school- and district-level points of contact to whom hazing allegations may be reported	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Prohibits retaliation against students who report incidents of hazing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Comports with state-level anti-hazing laws, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Students are provided with the policy and receive age appropriate, in-person training about the policy; training is provided in a variety of formats and in different settings ( <i>e.g.</i> , team/club meetings, school assemblies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Faculty and staff – including coaches and advisors for extracurricular activities – are provided with the policy and receive in-person training about the policy; training is provided in a variety of formats and in different settings ( <i>e.g.</i> , coach/advisor meetings, professional development sessions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Information is shared with parents, volunteers, and other stakeholders about how to access the policy and receive training about the policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and revised as needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b><i>Behavioral Expectations</i></b>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<p>➤ Students, parents, faculty/staff, athletic directors, coaches, volunteers, advisors, and other stakeholders understand what types of behavior may constitute hazing</p> <p><u>Note:</u> HazingPrevention.Org identifies some examples of hazing –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Forced activities for new recruits to “prove” their worth to join, including illegal activities</li> <li>○ Requirements to endure hardships such as staying awake, menial tasks, physical labor, running while blindfolded, etc.</li> <li>○ Humiliation or isolation of new or potential members</li> <li>○ Beatings, paddlings, or other physical acts against new or potential members</li> <li>○ Requirements for new or potential members to do things established members are not required to do</li> <li>○ Forced consumption of food and/or drinks, including alcohol<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>➤ Students, parents, faculty/staff, athletic directors, coaches, volunteers, and other stakeholders can identify some of the effects of hazing on the targeted student</p> <p><u>Note:</u> HazingPrevention.Org provides the following non-exhaustive list of warning signs of hazing –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sudden change in behavior or attitude after joining the organization or team</li> <li>○ Request to leave the organization or team with no real explanation</li> <li>○ Sudden decrease in communication with friends and family</li> <li>○ Physical or psychological exhaustion</li> <li>○ Unexplained weight loss</li> <li>○ Unexplained injuries or illness</li> <li>○ Change in sleeping or eating habits</li> <li>○ Withdrawal from normal activities</li> <li>○ Expressed feeling of sadness or feeling of worthlessness</li> <li>○ Increase in secrecy and unwillingness to share details<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>➤ Students are taught various ways that they can intervene when they witness suspected hazing</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>➤ Students know how to report incidents of hazing that they experience, witness, or hear about</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 HazingPrevention.Org, What Hazing Looks Like, available at <https://hazingprevention.org/home/hazing/facts-what-hazing-looks-like/>.

2 HazingPrevention.Org, 2018 Resource & Planning Guide: High School Edition at 18, available at <https://hazingprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2018-HS-Resource-Guide-FINAL-Version-1.pdf>.