

HAZING WORKSHOP OUTLINE

The following information is intended to serve as a guide for the hazing workshop you will be conducting with your teams. You may structure the workshop any way you like, but please be sure to at least touch on the topics below. Additional materials are available through the Athletic Director or Administrator in charge of athletics. This workshop should take approximately 15-20 minutes, and should be done after your team is selected, but well before your first competition. The coach must submit in writing (to the Athletic Director or Administrator in charge of athletics) a summary of the workshop for each team including materials reviewed, names of attendees, and date(s) of training.

-

I. READ AND EXPLAIN EWSD HAZING POLICY

Hazing is a form of harassment and will not be tolerated in conjunction with our school athletic program. Hazing is defined as “a willful act, occurring on or off school grounds, directed against a player or prospective member of a school-sponsored team, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a player or prospective team member for the purpose of initiation, admission into, or continued membership on any such team.” Consequences for hazing violations may range from individual suspension from participation in the athletic program for a period of time, to cancellation of an athletic schedule, depending upon the magnitude of the incident and number of athletes involved. Consequences for hazing violations brought to the attention of the administration after the season may be applied to and/or include subsequent athletic participation, athletic letter awards, or athletic probation. The athletic director and principal will determine consequences. Also, please make sure the students are aware there is now a state law prohibiting hazing.

II. ADDRESS HAZING “PARANOIA”

Everything our athletes do as a team is not considered hazing. Many athletes feel that we (administration) will accuse them of hazing when they are having innocent fun. It may be hard for them to believe this, but we are reasonable people and will not accuse them of hazing unless it is warranted. We are doing this because we have a responsibility to enforce the rules and try to prevent future hazing incidents.

III. WHAT IS HAZING, WHAT IS FUN?

This is a question that has no clear answer. There is definitely a gray area that has many kids frustrated. Team dinners or get-togethers outside of school are obviously fine, and we still encourage our athletes to have fun activities that build team unity. They just need to avoid rookie initiations, and forcing or coercing team members into doing things they don’t want to do. They should instead focus on team building activities where all members are treated alike. It is important that they realize that even if a younger team member appears to do something willingly, they may be uncomfortable, and this could constitute hazing. I think a good rule of thumb to suggest here is that any team activity they would be willing to do in the presence of a coach or administrator is fine. If they are doing something they would not want an adult to see, then it may cross the line.

IV. CONSIDER THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE

What one person considers harmless fun may be hurtful to another. Younger athletes may not have the confidence to say no to older teammates. They may do something they don't really want to do just to be accepted. They may feel shame, embarrassment, and pressure. They may lose trust in teammates whom they had looked up to previously. Before leading team activities, put yourselves in the shoes of the victim(s), and consider what kind of leader you want to be and what you want your teammates to think of you.

V. ABUSE OF POWER

Older athletes who haze younger teammates are abusing their power. Younger kids look up to their older teammates. By using power to haze younger team members, they are hurting not only the individuals being hazed, but the team in general. Individuals on a team who are leaders and role models should use their authority in positive, constructive ways. Ask yourself how you want your teammates to remember you when you leave?

VI. UNINTENTIONAL HARM

Often times the damage caused in hazing incidents is unintentional. Most people would not intentionally harm a younger teammate physically or psychologically. But it is important to realize that harm can be caused even when it is unintentional.

VII. JUST SAY NO

Yes, it's trite, but younger athletes need to understand that they should just say "no" if they are being coerced into doing something they don't want to do. They need to know that they can come to you, the coach, if they are being pressured by older teammates.

VIII. HAZING LAW

If it's not enough to avoid hazing just because it is wrong, consider that Vermont now has a law against hazing. In addition to being removed from a team and other school consequences, those who engage in hazing could face prosecution, fines, or worse!

IX. WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE BEEN HAZED

Kids have a lot of options here, but it is important that they are encouraged to communicate with someone. They can go to parents, friends, coaches, teachers, administrators, but they if it is a team situation, they should be strongly encouraged to go to you (Coach) first. Nothing can be done if they do not come forward.

X. IDEAS ON HOW TO AVOID HAZING

Have them discuss alternatives to initiations or hazing activities. Come up with ideas that are fun, that build team unity, include everyone, and do not make anyone uncomfortable.