

HAZING

2.701 5.327*+

The Sarasota County School District shall not tolerate hazing of any form. Conduct that constitutes hazing, as defined herein, is prohibited. The District expects students to conduct themselves appropriately for their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and the educational purpose underlying all school activities.

I. Definition of Hazing

Hazing means any action or situation endangering the mental or physical health or safety of a student at a school with any of grades six (6) through twelve (12) for purposes including, but not limited to, initiation or admission into or affiliation with any organization operating under the sanction of a school with any of grades six (6) through twelve (12). Hazing shall include, but is not limited to,

- A. Pressuring, coercing, or forcing a student into violating state or federal law; consuming any food, liquor, drug, or other substance; or participating in physical activity that could adversely affect the health or safety of the student.
- B. Any brutality of a physical nature such as beating, whipping, branding, or exposure to the elements.

II. Reporting an Act of Hazing

- A. At each school with any of grades six (6) through twelve (12), the principal or the principal's designee shall be responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy.
- B. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee.

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- C. All other members of the school community, including students, parents as defined by Florida Statutes, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy anonymously or in person to the principal or principal's designee.
- D. The principal of each school that includes any of grades six (6) through twelve (12) in the District shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents, how a report of hazing may be filed either in person or anonymously and how this report will be acted upon.
- E. The victim of hazing, anyone who witnessed the hazing, and anyone who has credible information that an act of hazing has taken place may file a report of hazing.
- F. A school employee, school volunteer, student, parent or other person who promptly reports in good faith an act of hazing to the appropriate school official and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set forth in the District policy is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident.
- G. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of hazing will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments.
- H. Any written or oral reporting of an act of hazing shall be considered an official means of reporting such act(s).
- I. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

III. Investigation of a Report of Hazing

- A. The investigation of a reported act of hazing is deemed to be a school-related activity and shall begin with a report of such an act.

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- B. The principal or designee shall select an individual(s), employed by the school and trained in investigative procedures, to initiate the investigation. The person may not be the accused perpetrator or victim.

- C. Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), and witnesses shall be conducted privately, separately, and shall be confidential. Each individual (victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses) will be interviewed separately and at no time will the alleged perpetrator and victim be interviewed together.

- D. The investigator shall collect and evaluate the facts including but not limited to
 - 1. Description of incident(s) including nature of the behavior;
 - 2. Context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred;
 - 3. How often the conduct occurred;
 - 4. Whether there were past incidents or past continuing patterns of behavior;
 - 5. The relationship between the parties involved;
 - 6. The characteristics of parties involved, i.e., grade, age;
 - 7. The identity and number of individuals who participated in hazing;
 - 8. Where the alleged incident(s) occurred;

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9. Whether the conduct adversely affected the student's/students' health or safety;
 10. The date, time, and method in which the parents of all parties involved were contacted.
- E. Whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy shall require a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances and shall include
1. Recommended remedial steps necessary to stop the hazing; and
 2. A written final report to the principal.
- F. The maximum of ten (10) school days shall be the limit for the initial filing of incidents and completion of the investigative procedural steps.
- G. The highest level of confidentiality possible will be upheld regarding the submission of a complaint or a report of hazing and the investigative procedures that follow.
- IV. Investigation to Determine Whether a Reported Act of Hazing is Within the Scope of the District
- A. The principal or designee will assign an individual(s) who is trained in investigative procedures to initiate an investigation of whether an act of hazing is within the scope of the School District.
 - B. The trained investigator(s) will provide a report on results of investigation with recommendations for the principal to make a determination if an act of hazing falls within the scope of the District.

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1. If it is within the scope of the District, a thorough investigation shall be conducted.
2. If it is outside the scope of the District and determined a criminal act, the principal shall refer the incident(s) to appropriate law enforcement.
3. If it is outside the scope of the District and determined not a criminal act, the principal or designee shall inform the parents of all students involved.

V. Notification to Parents of Incidents of Hazing

- A. Immediate notification to the parents of a victim of hazing.

The principal, or designee, shall promptly report via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of hazing as defined by this policy to the parent(s) of all students involved on the same day an investigation of the incident(s) has been initiated. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

- B. Immediate notification to the parents of the perpetrator of an act of hazing.

The principal, or designee, shall promptly report via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of hazing as defined by this policy to the parents of all students involved on the same day an investigation of the incident(s) has been initiated. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

- C. Notification to local agencies where criminal charges may be pursued.

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Once the investigation has been completed and it has been determined that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator(s), all appropriate local law enforcement agencies will be notified by telephone and/or in writing.

VI. Referral of Victims and Perpetrators of Hazing for Counseling

When hazing is suspected or when a hazing incident is reported, counseling services shall be made available to the victim(s), perpetrator(s), and parents.

- A. The teacher or parent may request informal consultation with school staff, e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, to determine the severity of concern and appropriate steps to address the concern. The teacher may request that the involved student's parents are included.
- B. School personnel or the parent may refer a student to the school intervention team for consideration of appropriate services. Parental involvement shall be required when the student is referred to the intervention team.
- C. If a formal discipline report or formal complaint is made, the principal or designee must refer the student(s) to the school intervention team for determination of counseling support and interventions. Parental involvement shall be required.
- D. The intervention team may recommend
 - 1. Counseling and support to address the needs of the victims of hazing;
 - 2. Research-based counseling or interventions to address the behavior of the students who haze others; and/or
 - 3. Research-based counseling or interventions which include assistance and support provided to parents, if deemed necessary or appropriate.

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VII. Disciplinary Action

If the incident is determined to be within the scope of the District, disciplinary action will be consistent with the *Code of Student Conduct*.

VIII. Reporting Incidents of Hazing

- A. Incidents of hazing shall be reported in the school's report of data concerning school safety and discipline data required under s. 1006.09(6), F.S. The report shall include each incident of hazing and the resulting consequences, including discipline and referrals. The report shall also include each reported incident of hazing that did not meet the criteria of a prohibited act under this section with recommendations regarding such incidents.

- B. The District will utilize Florida's School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) Statewide Report on School Safety and Discipline Data to report hazing incidents.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 1001.41, 1001.42, F.S.

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