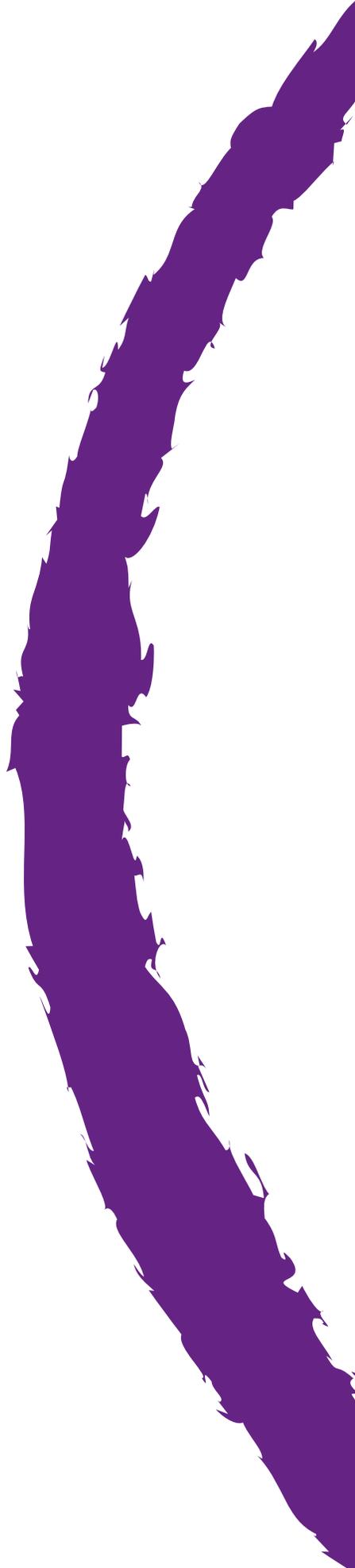


Where Hazing Happens

By Travis T. Apgar



Some people might be surprised to learn that hazing practices are not unique to any one type of organization. Stories of hazing can be found in various types of groups and organizations including the corporate world, the military, religious organizations, and family oriented fraternal groups. While the term hazing often conjures images of fraternity pledging, or sports rookie treatment, they just happen to be the examples most commonly reported by the news media or depicted in movies with a college setting.

When we narrow the focus to college student related hazing, it proves to be quite prevalent. In a study conducted by Elizabeth J. Allan, Ph.D., and Mary Madden, Ph.D. (2008), 3 in 5 college students reported having experienced hazing across a broad variety of organizations, clubs and teams. While varsity sport teams, fraternities and sororities top the list, they are joined by club sports, performing arts organizations, service organizations, intramural teams, recreation clubs, academic clubs, and honor societies (Allan & Madden, 2008). These findings are supported by the stories we see in the media. Two powerful examples are the 2011 hazing death of Robert Champion, Florida A&M University Marching Band Drum Major, and the most recent alleged sexually charged hazing culture within The Ohio State University Marching Band.

Institutions which have identified desired outcomes of reducing or eliminating hazing from their campuses should take a broad scope approach. Various efforts such as education, social norming/ messaging, policy development, and enforcement must take the data into account and recognize that this is not a compartmentalized phenomenon. Acknowledging its presence in a broad range of groups and actively working across experiences to bolster the general knowledge base of the community will increase the community buy-in to prevent hazing activities.

One-time prevention tactics, such as an awareness program, or a policy change, are never adequate. They are likely helpful in the effort to end activities, perhaps even necessary, but they are not sufficient. When an organization or institution begins to think through how to

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end hazing, they can consider a social-ecological model that addresses the issue across the multiple layers of the community.

(Adapted from the CDC Social-Ecological Model)

Individual: The personal attitudes and practices that can promote prevention, or lead to the individual acting as a perpetrator. Education and skills training, such as bystander intervention can be helpful in shaping behavior.

Relationship: Consider the relationships within social circles, peer groups, family, and how those influencing factors can contribute to individual decision making that promotes prevention, or not. Modeling a healthy welcoming experience for new members is helpful to groups trying to transition away from hazing.

Community: Consider the characteristics or norms of the communities which students belong to and determine if these settings passively or directly promote a hazing culture. Public media campaigns such as social norming can debunk misperceptions of the norms and encourage appropriate behavior.

Societal: Overarching societal factors can contribute to organizational climate which intentionally or unintentionally may promote a culture of hazing. Reviewing and rewriting campus or organizational policy can set clear community expectations that hazing is not acceptable.

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