

Professional and Volunteer Practitioner Guide

Employing Situational Strength in Hazing Prevention

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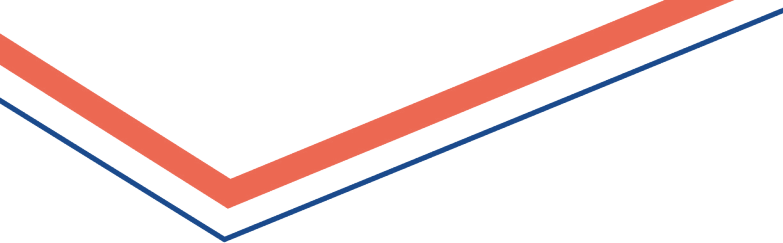
This guide supports campus based and organization advisors and volunteers to think about and applying a summary model from a monograph entitled *Evaluating Hazing and Related Behaviors, Intervention & Prevention Efforts: A Solutions Based Approach* (Biddix et al., 2022). The monograph offers a collection of hazing research at the middle school, high school, and college level and identifies intervention strategies from the prevention literature.

The concept of **situational strength** (Meyer et al., 2010) suggests that cues in the environment signal to individuals and organizations about what behaviors are accepted and valued. There are four characteristics of situational strength that determine decision-making in the environment:

- the clarity of the messaging,
- the consistency of the messaging,
- the constraints that make it challenging to exhibit the behavior, and
- the consequences associated with the behavior (both positive and negative).

In the case of a campus or organizational culture that supports hazing, individuals and organizations may be seeing::

- clear and repeated messages (high clarity and consistency) that hazing is tolerated or expected based on
 - frequency of observance,
 - commonly transmitted information that hazing is happening (whether or not these are accurate),
 - attitudes expressed by peers.
- belief that the organization or university will not take action against organizations who do haze often because the instances occur without institutional or organizational knowledge but wide knowledge amongst peers (few constraints),
- choosing not to engage in hazing has negative social consequences (high consequence for young adults).



Your role as a professional or volunteer is to disrupt the situational strength supporting hazing and to reframe the narrative to one in which hazing is not valued or necessary. Go back to the *Piazza Model of Horizontal Hazing* (Veldkamp et al., 2021) and consider the following questions:

- How could you disrupt the clarity of anti-hazing messages by increasing the frequency, consistency and the clarity of anti-hazing or other closely related messages such as those preventing physical assault or problematic drinking? Consider passive campaigns, ongoing trainings, and social media, particularly unofficial organization/university channels.
- How can you increase the consistency of anti-hazing messages across all stakeholders such as campus police, coaches, organizational advisors, alumni, and influential peer leaders?
- How do you better publicize reporting mechanisms and make the consequences little to none for the reporter so that commonly understood and accepted behaviors don't go unreported to advisors or organizational or campus authority figures?
- What are ways you can very visibly take action when reports come in so that the community does not perceive that "no one does anything about hazing here."
- Where is hazing occurring on your campus? How can you increase the presence of authority figures at times and locations when hazing is occurring?
- What are some ways you can uncouple organizational and individual status with hazing in your organization or campus? Consider who decides who has status (often other students) and get peers to encourage different behaviors (for example, imagine if women's organizations refused to socialize with men's groups that haze).
- What mechanisms do you create to closely monitor the situational strength of hazing on an ongoing basis? Ensure there are infrastructures in place to educate, monitor, confront, and reward.

As you consider ways you might disrupt the situational strength on your organization or campus, research suggests several strategies that you can enact at the individual, organizational, and community levels, outlined in *at All Levels of the Horizontal Hazing Model*

References

Biddix, J. P., Sasso, P. A., Perlow, E., Joyce, B. & Veldkamp, S. (2022). *Evaluating hazing and related behaviors, intervention, & prevention efforts: A solutions-based approach*. North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC).

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Veldkamp, S., Sasso, P. A., Biddix, J. P., Joyce, B., Perlow, E., & Maxwell, T. (2021). *Horizontal campus hazing model*. Penn State University: Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research and Reform.

Questions & Feedback

Inquiries, comments, and feedback related to this guide can be directed to PiazzaCenter@psu.edu.



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