

Professional and Volunteer Practitioner Guide

How to Use the Horizontal Hazing Model in Prevention

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This guide supports campus based and organization advisors and volunteers to think about and apply 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.

Thoughts about hazing:

- Hazing culture is derived from and perpetuated by the interaction of individual characteristics, group culture and behaviors, and community norms.
- Individuals are more susceptible to hazing when they have prior experiences with hazing, a strong need to belong, or when those close to them hold pro-hazing attitudes.
- Hazing persists because it is sustained as tradition and a rite of passage, and perpetuated as mechanisms of dominance, control, and status building and maintenance.
- Hazing occurs in a variety of college organizations, but happens most frequently in varsity athletics, fraternities and sororities, and club sports.
- Hazing must be addressed at the individual, organizational and community level of your school, campus, or organizational ecosystem.
- Prevention and intervention efforts are best framed and addressed as community problems.
- Efforts to address hazing should be sustained, repeated, and supported by trained individuals.
- Effective programs should focus on both groups and individuals, and often are more effective when the focus is on skill-building. This includes changing the way people think and feel about hazing while enhancing interpersonal skills such as communication, problem-solving, empathy, emotional awareness and regulation, conflict management, and teamwork.

How to Apply the Horizontal Hazing Model

The **Piazza Model of Horizontal Hazing** is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary model. The model emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual, organizational, and community expectations, characteristics, values, and perceptions which can drive participation in or elimination of hazing behaviors (Veldkamp et al., 2021).

At the **individual level**, prior experiences with hazing coupled with the desire for belonging, the opportunity to affirm and align one's identity with group identity and status, and the desire to feel as if individuals have experienced a rite of passage can make individuals more susceptible to hazing practices. You may ask questions like:

- What prior experiences with hazing are coming into your fraternity and sorority community?
- What are the characteristics of your student body that make them susceptible to hazing?
- Are there certain "feeder" high schools where students bring norms around hazing acceptability?
- What percent of the chapter are current or former participants in activities that often include some form of hazing (ex. high school athletics)?
- What can be learned about problems fraternity and sorority life are inheriting from other high school and college organizations and experiences?

At the **organizational level**, internal to the organization, mechanisms of decision-making about organization or team activities, normative pressures around gender performance, acceptance of violence and deviance, and cultural transmission among members all impact hazing activities and participation. External to the organization, the desire for high status and reputation among other organizations can be a powerful driver, particularly in campus or regional communities where status is higher for those organizations with more difficult or more rigorous joining processes. This can be iterative in that once an organization achieves high status, increasing the difficulty in joining helps preserve that status and serves as a gatekeeping function to ensure only those willing to protect the status are able to join. You may want to observe:

- Who is the organization admitting and what was their collective high school experience?
- What gender norms do you see enacted while visiting with the chapter?
- What does the chapter facility (if applicable) look like? Do members take care of it? Is the work of maintaining it shared among all or only a select group (ex. new members or underclassmen)?
- What type of reputation does the group have in the community? How long have they maintained that status? Is their reputation increasing or decreasing?
- How is this status communicated to other external audiences?
- How does the group make decisions – consensus, committee or individual leaders? When was the last retreat and how many attended?
- How are sub-groups within a group getting along? Is there infighting over goals and roles? Are most members motivated to work toward chapter goals?
- In what ways are traditions documented and maintained from year to year within the chapter?

At the **community level**, community norms around related public health challenges like violence acceptance, alcohol abuse, and campus or organizational rule following or deviance all play a role in the culture that supports or disrupts hazing. Additionally, the degree to which organizations are interconnected with one another through individuals with shared cross-organizational membership or prior shared experiences (e.g. all members of the same high school athletic team where hazing occurred join the same or similar organizations and introduce their high school traditions) can lead to cross-organizational transmission. What data can you access?

- What data do you have on drinking trends of groups/councils compared to campus averages?
- Are there any trends toward groups drinking more over time (individual vs. organizational conduct statistics, or national surveys such as the Fraternity and Sorority Experience Survey and ACHA data)?
- What community trends do you see in group hazing motivations (example Dyad Strategies data)?
- What is the culture of involvement on your campus? Do individuals tend to cross organizational boundaries (student involvement data, NSSE data)?
- What campus wide traditions support or encourage risky behaviors that are co-mingled with hazing (campus conduct data, police reports, neighbor complaint records)?



Next Steps in Research

Looking at the model and guided by the questions above, begin to assess each group or community based on the model. Then refer to the next guide on disrupting situational strength.

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).

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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