

7 Hazing

Hazing is against the laws of the State of Texas and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi regulations. Student Activities, the Division of Student Affairs, and the university will enforce all legislation, laws and regulations pertaining to the issue. Please read the following information carefully before planning your organizational activities.

On August 31, 1987, a law went into effect in the State of Texas regarding hazing. Below is an abbreviated summary, in question and answer form, of the contents of that law and the applicability and implications for students, faculty and staff at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. THIS IS ONLY A SUMMARY. Certain points in the new law have been omitted for editorial purposes. For the full text of the law, please see University Rules at: www.tamucc.edu/provost/urules/gopher/general/pol824.html

7.1.1 What is the Definition of Hazing?

Hazing means any intentional, knowing, or reckless act occurring on or off the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a student, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in or maintaining membership in any organization whose members are or include students at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. This term includes, but is not limited to:

- A. Any type of physical brutality, such as whipping, beating, striking, branding, electronic shocking, placing of a harmful substance on the body, or similar activity.
- B. Any type of physical activity, such as sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement in a small space, calisthenics, or other activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk or harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
- C. Any activity involving consumption of a food, liquid, alcoholic beverage, liquor, drug or other substance which subjects the student to unreasonable risk of harm or which adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
- D. Any activity that intimidates or threatens the student with ostracism, that subjects the student to extreme mental stress, shame, or humiliation, or adversely affects the mental health or dignity of the student or discourages the student from entering or remaining registered in an educational institution, or that may reasonably be expected to cause a student to leave the organization or the institution rather than submit to acts described in this subsection.
- E. Any activity that induces or requires the student to perform a duty or task which involves a violation of the Penal Code.

In addition, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has also defined hazing to include:

- 1) Misuse of authority by virtue of one's class rank or leadership position.
- 2) Any form of physical bondage of a student.
- 3) "Road Trips" or taking a student to an outlying area and dropping him/her off.
- 4) Any form of "Quadding". (Quadding includes but is not limited to throwing a person into water or holding a student down and pouring water on him/her.)

7.1.2 How do I commit a hazing offense?

A person commits an offense if he/she...

- 1 Engages in hazing;

- 2 Solicits, encourages, directs, aids or attempts to aid another in hazing;
- 3 Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly permits hazing to occur;
- 4 Has firsthand knowledge of the planning of a specific hazing incident involving a student of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi or firsthand knowledge that a specific hazing incident has occurred, and knowingly fails to report said knowledge in writing to Student Activities, Recreational Sports or Student Affairs.

7.2.3 Penalties for Hazing

- **Does it matter if I did not intend to harm anyone?** No. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi guidelines state that if one of the above occurs, it is hazing, regardless of your intent.
- **Does it matter if the person being hazed agrees to the activity?** No. The law and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi's guidelines state that if one of the above occurs, it is hazing, regardless of the consent or cooperation of the recipient. CONSENT is not a defense.
- **What is the penalty if I am found guilty of hazing?** The student may be subjected to university disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the university, in addition to or regardless of any penalty imposed by the courts.
- **Are there state penalties for hazing?** Yes, they are:
 - A. Failing to report hazing. Fine up to \$1,000 and or up to 180 days in jail.
 - B. Hazing resulting in no serious bodily injury: Fine of \$500-1,000 and /or 90-180 days in jail.
 - C. Hazing resulting in serious bodily injury: Fine of \$1,000-5,000 and/or 180 days to 1 year in jail.
 - D. Hazing resulting in death: Fine of \$5,000-10,000 and/or 1-2 years in jail.
 - E. Except where the hazing results in death, the student may be required to perform community service in lieu of confinement in jail.
- **Can an organization be found guilty of hazing?** Yes. An organization commits an offense if the organization condones or encourages hazing or if an officer or any combination of members, pledges, or alumni of the organization commits or assists in the commission of hazing. If an organization is found guilty of hazing, it may lose its recognition and ability to re-group on campus for a period of time. The individual members may also face penalties for their actions.
- **Can I get in trouble for reporting hazing?** No. Any person who reports a specific hazing incident involving a student to Student Activities or other appropriate officials is protected from civil, criminal liability, or university judicial sanctions. A person who reports in bad faith or with malice, however, is not protected by this section.

7.2.4 Where do I report hazing?

Sorority/fraternity violation: Greek Advisor, 825-2706. 825-5855 or 825-3430.

General student organization violation: Student Activities, 825-2707.

Sport Club violation: Recreational Sports, 825-2455.

All other violations: Student Affairs, 825-2612.

7.2.5 Alternatives to hazing

Sometimes, organizations that haze new members are confused about how to change these practices. There are many creative ways to change from a hazing to a non-hazing

organization. The following are some specific examples of ways to eliminate hazing and make membership a challenging but positive experience:

In Greek-letter organizations, the very term “pledge” is often equated with hazing practices. Many national organizations have sought to eliminate this term in order to foster more positive attitudes toward the new members. Some substitute terms include “associate members” and “new members.”

When organizations are challenged to eliminate hazing practices, some members may be resistant to this change. In many cases, those who are most vocal against eliminating hazing are those who are bitter and angry about the hazing that they themselves endured (but don't admit this publicly) and expect that others should be abused in order to gain “true” membership in the organization. You will also find that some of these folks are likely to be bullies of the organization – people who enjoy a “power trip” at the expense of someone else.

Of course, if you try to eliminate hazing in your group, you will likely encounter many elaborate reasons for why this will be devastating to your organization. While there will be some staunch supporters of the status quo, there will be many who can be convinced of the negative effects and potential risks of hazing. Believers in the supposed “benefits” of hazing may be more likely to change their opinion if they can envision some alternatives. The supposed “benefits” of hazing follow in bold with non-hazing alternatives to accomplish the same goal listed alongside.

1. **Foster Unity:** Have the members of your group/organization work together on a community service project. Visit a ropes course to work on group cohesiveness, communication and leadership skills. Another option for fostering unity without hazing is for the members to work together to plan a social or athletic event with another organization.
2. **Develop Problem Solving Abilities:** Have new members discuss chapter weaknesses such as poor recruitment, apathy, and poor scholarship, and plan solutions that the organization might then adopt.
3. **Develop Leadership Skills:** Encourage participation in campus activities outside of the organization. Encourage new members to get involved in organizational committees and/or leadership roles. Develop a peer mentor program within your organization for leadership roles. Invite university/community/business leaders into the organization to share their experiences.
4. **Instill a Sense of Membership:** Plan special events when the entire organization gets together to attend a movie, play, or religious service. Plan a “membership circle” where students participate in a candlelight service (only battery-powered candles are allowed in the UC) in which each person has a chance to express what membership means to them.
5. **Promote Scholarship:** Take advantage of your university academic and tutoring services. Designate study hours for members of your organization. Invite university or community experts to discuss test-taking skills, study methods, time management, etc.
6. **Build Awareness of Organization's History:** Invite an older member to talk about the organization's early days, its founding, special traditions, and prominent former members.
7. **Knowledge of the Greek System (for Fraternities and Sororities):** Invite leaders of IFC, Panhellenic, and/or Advisors to speak on Greek governance, including their goals and expectations of the Greek system.

8. **Aid Career Goals:** Use university resources for seminars on resume writing, job interview skills, and for information on various careers.
9. **Involve All Members in the Community:** Get involved with campus and community service projects. Plan fundraisers for local charitable organizations.
10. **Improve Relations with Other Organizations:** Encourage new members to plan social or service projects with other organizations; work together to plan joint social or service activities.

7.2.6 Hazing “Myths and Facts”

Myth #1: Hazing is primarily a problem for fraternities and sororities.

Fact: Hazing is a societal problem. Hazing incidents have been frequently documented in the military, athletic teams, marching bands, religious cults, professional schools and other types of clubs, and/or organizations. Reports of hazing activities in high schools are also on the rise.

Myth #2: Hazing is no more than foolish pranks that sometimes go awry.

Fact: Hazing is an act of power and control over others – it is victimization. Hazing is pre-meditated and NOT accidental. Hazing is abusive, degrading and often life-threatening.

Myth #3: As long as there’s no malicious intent, a little hazing should be O.K.

Fact: Even if there’s no malicious “intent” safety may still be a factor in traditional hazing activities that are considered to be “all in good fun.” For example, serious accidents have occurred during scavenger hunts and kidnapping trips. Besides, what purpose do such activities serve in promoting the growth and development of group team members?

Myth #4: Hazing is an effective way to teach respect and develop discipline.

Fact: First of all, respect must be EARNED – not taught. Victims of hazing rarely report having respect for those who have hazed them. Just like other forms of victimization, hazing breeds mistrust, apathy and alienation.

Myth #5: If someone agrees to participate in an activity, it can’t be considered hazing.

Fact: In states that have laws against hazing, consent of the victim can’t be used as a defense in a civil suit. This is because even if someone agrees to participate in a potentially hazardous action it may not be true consent when considering the peer pressure and desire to belong to the group.

Myth #6: It’s difficult to determine whether or not a certain activity is hazing – it’s such a gray area sometimes.

Fact: It’s not difficult to decide if an activity is hazing if you use common sense and ask yourself the following questions:

7.2.6 Questions to ask to determine whether it is hazing

- Will active/current members of the group refuse to participate with the new members and do exactly what they’re being asked to do?
- Does the activity risk emotional or physical abuse?
- Is there any risk of injury or a question of safety?
- Do you have any reservation describing the activity to your parents, to a professor or university official?
- Would you object to the activity being photographed for the school newspaper or filmed by a local TV news crew?
- Is alcohol involved?