



BYSTANDER INTERVENTION GUIDE

2024





Bystander Intervention and Hazing

Any situation in which a person observes or hears about potential harm and takes steps to support and/or prevent that harm to those involved or to themselves is considered bystander intervention.^{4,7} ***This is the idea expressed in the slogan “See something, say something”.*** This resource is designed to help folks learn about bystander intervention for hazing prevention and participate in activities to strengthen intervention skills.

Why Utilize Bystander Intervention for Hazing Prevention⁸

1. It helps change social and community roles by calling attention to hazing behaviors that are often minimized, normalized, or dismissed as harmless pranks, antics, and traditions.
2. It discourages victim blaming by placing accountability on the hazers.
3. It has a demonstrated impact on sexual violence prevention, and implementation can be translated to hazing prevention.

Why should you become an Empowered Bystander?

1. To foster community change, the more people speak up against hazing the less likely hazing behaviors continue to occur or be normalized.
2. To make space for hazing victim voices to be heard and be taken seriously by their community.
3. To help strengthen a culture of accountability for hazing.
4. To uphold your commitment to your organization or team. Each of us has a responsibility to ensure hazing behaviors do not persist within our organizations, teams, or in our campus community.

Becoming an Empowered Bystander Against Hazing

There are five steps to becoming an empowered bystander, and these steps build on each other.



(Berkowitz, 2009; Stapleton & Allan, 2014)

Step 1: Notice the Behavior

When individuals have a complete understanding of what hazing is and how it can present in groups, teams, and organizations, they are more likely to notice and identify hazing. To build these skills, individuals should familiarize themselves with the definition of hazing and the *Spectrum of Hazing™*.²

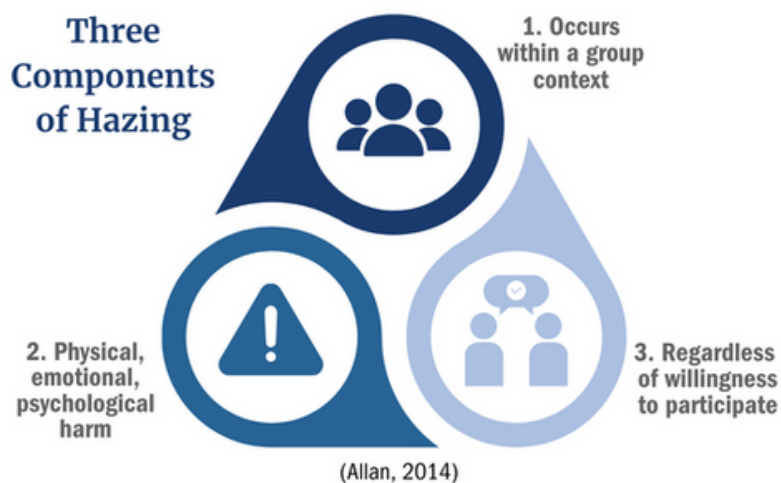
Defining Hazing

Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them, regardless of a person's willingness to participate.^{3,6}

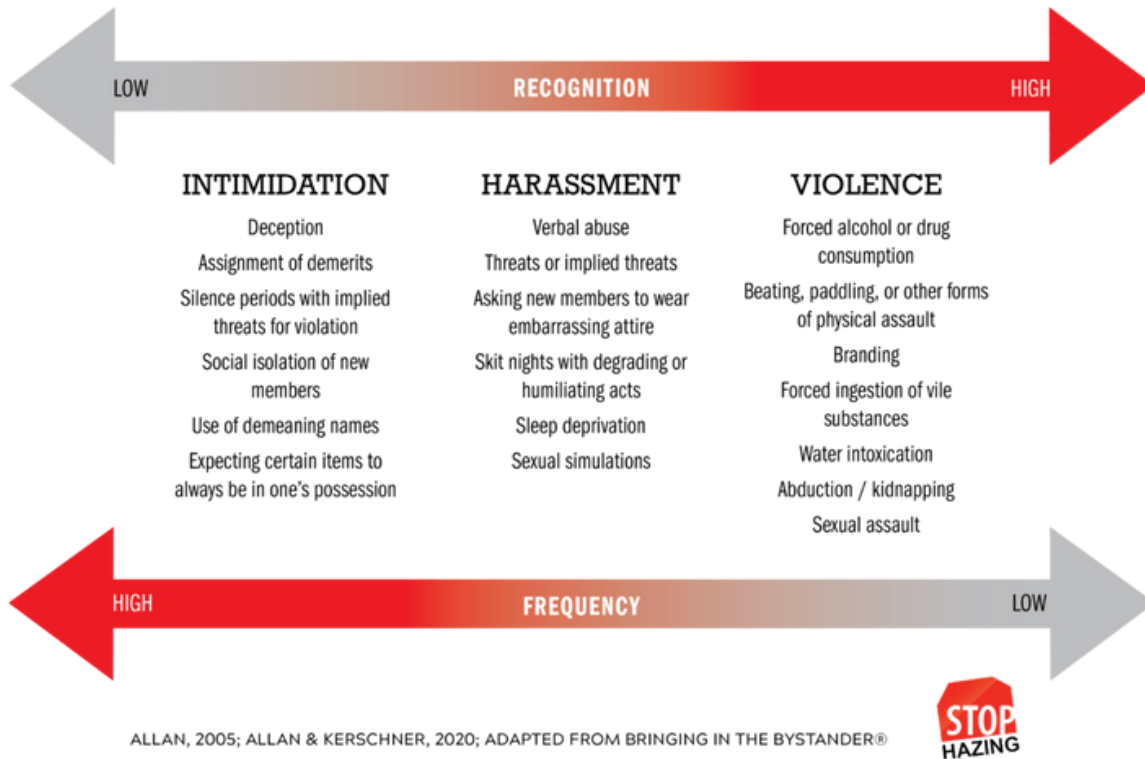
Notably, there are three components to defining hazing:

1. it occurs in a group context
2. it includes humiliating, degrading, and endangering behaviors, and
3. it happens regardless of an individual's willingness to participate (or regardless of consent).

The third component, the consent component of the definition, is particularly important because, while individuals might be presented with a “choice” to participate in hazing, the “choice” is often in the context of peer pressure and power dynamics within the group. This makes providing true consent extremely difficult.



The Spectrum of Hazing™



Becoming familiar with the *Spectrum of Hazing™* can support skill development for recognizing a full range of hazing behaviors. Increasing recognition of the higher frequency hazing behaviors enhances the opportunities to intervene in hazing situations that are often normalized or minimized as harmless and shift them toward healthier team-building activities before they escalate to even more potentially harmful and endangering behaviors, such as those on the violence end of the continuum.

The following activity encourages participants to think about how behaviors across the *Spectrum of Hazing™* have shown up on their own campus or in their groups and teams.

Activity One: Build Your Own Spectrum

Directions:

In a large group setting, brainstorm different ways you have seen or heard about hazing on campus (this could be done with sticky notes, a running list, or just aloud). Using a large sticky pad (or whiteboard), create three columns for categories labeled “intimidation,” “harassment,” and “violence.”

Next, have participants write down the hazing behaviors participants have noticed or heard about, writing or placing each in its appropriate category. Have participants explain why the behavior would be considered hazing and why it belongs in the assigned category. Participants do not have to disclose which organization they have seen it from or discuss identifying details.

Note: Don't erase or disassemble this spectrum you've co-created, we will circle back to this for another activity.

Tips for Facilitation:

- You could use a sticky paper pad or whiteboard to make a list of the behaviors, or you could have small groups/pairs develop a list.
- If you are facilitating this discussion on Zoom, consider using Zoom's whiteboard feature or another digital whiteboard, like Miro.
- If you are using a virtual whiteboard, create three columns for the categories labeled "intimidation," "harassment," and "violence" and assign each column a sticky note color. Use the sticky notes to capture the behaviors described by participants.

Discussion Questions:

1. Before seeing the *Spectrum of Hazing™*, what images came to your mind where you heard the term "hazing"?
2. How many hazing behaviors did you recognize before seeing the *Spectrum of Hazing™*?
3. What surprised you about the spectrum you built, if anything?
4. Is it important to recognize the intimidation and harassment hazing behaviors? Why or why not?



Step 2: Interpret the Behavior as a Problem

Building on the previous step of recognizing hazing, it is important to acknowledge hazing as problematic behaviors that need to be addressed, no matter where it is on the *Spectrum*.

The 2008 National Study revealed that **55% of college students involved in a group, team, or student organization experience hazing**, and these behaviors can impact students physically, emotionally, mentally, financially, spiritually, and academically.³ Beyond individual students, the impacts of hazing are felt by families, friends, and other group members.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can hazing impact individuals *beyond physical injuries or sickness*?
 - a. How could hazing impact individuals *mentally and emotionally*?
 - b. How could hazing impact individuals *financially*?
 - c. How could hazing impact individuals *academically*?
2. How can hazing impact individuals' *friends and families*?
 - a. How might hazing impact an individual's *relationships*?
3. How can hazing create unhealthy group dynamics and environments?



Step 3: Accept Responsibility to Intervene

Once the hazing behavior has been identified and interpreted as problematic, individuals must accept personal responsibility for intervention. Accepting this responsibility is especially important when considering the potential of a **diffusion of responsibility**– when being in a group setting can lead individuals to believe that *someone else* will intervene or take action.⁵

This allows the cycle of hazing to continue, even when group members know it is wrong. It can be easy to assume that someone else will do or say something, or write off the situation by saying “It’s none of my business.” The fear of embarrassment or retaliation may also make someone nervous to intervene. However, bystander intervention as hazing prevention calls on everyone to realize that they owe it to themselves, their peers, their organizations, and their campus community to act against hazing.

Step Four: Intervening Safely¹

Before intervening, individuals need to learn how to do so safely. Here are some strategies to safely disrupt hazing and intervene safely.

1. **Shifting the focus:** Shifting the focus involves redirecting attention from the person(s) being hazed towards something/someone else. Examples include:
 - Ignoring or refusing to engage with group members who are encouraging the hazing.
 - Changing the subject when someone brings up participating in hazing, to demonstrate a lack of interest in participating.
 - Initiating a discussion about the organization’s values and suggesting alternative healthy team-building activities that do not lead to hazing.
2. **Safely confronting:** Confronting the hazing directly involves letting others know you are not going to participate in hazing. Examples include:
 - Encouraging others to not participate in hazing.
 - Engaging others to think critically about the harm of hazing behaviors.
 - Describing your concerns about the hazing behaviors and their impact on individual members and group dynamics.
 - Discouraging those who are carrying out or planning the hazing behaviors.
3. **Shifting attitudes:** Shifting attitudes involves taking small steps to de-normalize acts of hazing, which will lead to a greater impact. Examples include:
 - Talking about hazing behaviors to increase knowledge and awareness.
 - Helping others see how harmful all hazing behaviors can be (not just violence hazing).
 - Challenging misconceptions about “harmless” hazing behaviors and “traditions”.
 - Supporting those who experience/experienced hazing by helping connect them to resources available through the organization or campus.
4. **Documenting the behavior:** Consider filing a report with your institution’s Fraternity and Sorority Life Office, Office of Community Standards (conduct), Compliance Officer (athletics), Dean of Students office, or campus safety officers, so that individuals and groups can be held accountable for their role in hazing. Be sure to provide as much information as possible about those involved, the location of the hazing, and the behaviors witnessed, so that professionals can follow up accordingly.

The following are important considerations for safe and respectful bystander intervention:

- Take care of yourself and ensure your own safety. Get support from your peers or from campus safety officials as needed. Find another person to be an ally with you.
- Give respect to the other person(s) by listening to what they have to say openly and honestly. Recognize when to “call out” someone versus calling someone “in” to a productive conversation.
- While hazing is never justified, these abusive and harmful behaviors can be cyclical. Keep an ear out for underlying issues or warning signs that a person may be dealing with past or current concerns.
- Be aware of the other person’s level of defensiveness. Look for opportunities to keep the conversation open, and monitor if others are showing a willingness or resistance to what you are saying. Ensure that mutual respect is maintained throughout the conversation.

Step 5: Take Action

There are multiple ways to take action against hazing. Building your skill set to intervene safely can help you decide which strategy makes sense for the particular situation you are in and your comfort level. After **directly** or **indirectly intervening**, it is important to check up on the affected parties and refer them to the available campus resources.

Discussion Questions:

1. Reflect on a time when you took action to help someone or when someone took action to help you. Describe the scenario.
 - a. How did it feel to help? How did it feel to receive help?
2. Can you think of a time when you could have intervened but didn’t?
 - a. What barriers stopped you? After learning about bystander intervention, what approaches might you try in the future?



The following activity asks participants to think about the hazing Spectrum built during Activity 1 and to discuss how someone could intervene using this 5-step process for bystander intervention.

Activity 2: Developing a Plan for Bystander Intervention

Returning to the Build-Your-Own Spectrum activity from earlier: Knowing what you know now, create a plan for disrupting those hazing behaviors. Split the audience into 3 groups, each assigned a section of the spectrum (intimidation, harassment, violence), and discuss how you would implement steps 4 (intervening safely) and 5 (taking action) of bystander intervention as outlined above. Then, draft an intervention plan.

When developing your intervention plan, consider the following questions and prompts:

- Why is it important to have an intervention plan?
- Describe how you would address each hazing behavior if you heard about it or saw it happening.
- Which of the four intervention steps would or could you implement for each hazing behavior? Provide an example(s) of what this could look like in action.
- Include resources for or information about:
 - Reporting the hazing incident (on campus, off campus, to the national organization, etc.)
 - Supporting people who were hazed (medically, emotionally, etc.)
 - Planning an alternative, healthy group bonding activity

After discussing these prompts and questions, write down the intervention plan in a shared document - regardless of whether these activities were completed in-person or virtually - and share it with everyone. Now, the information gathered through this activity can be easily accessed by all members of the organization.

Discussion Questions:

Directions: In a group or individually, ask the participants to self-reflect on what they learned during this experience using the questions below.

- How can you confront acts of hazing in and outside of your organization?
- What resources can help you build recognition and intervention skills for intervention? Does your organization have resources available?
- How can you take action against hazing both directly and indirectly when you see it, know, or hear it is occurring?
- How might hazing impact your campus community?
- What is your biggest takeaway from this experience?



References

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Recommended Citation:

StopHazing (2024). Bystander Intervention Guide.