

SUBJECT: HAZING OF STUDENTS

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe, productive and positive learning environment within its schools. Hazing activities are demeaning, abusive and/or illegal behaviors that harm victims, and are inconsistent with the educational goals of the BOCES by negatively impacting the school environment. Hazing of a student by another student or group of students is strictly prohibited on BOCES property; in BOCES buildings; on BOCES buses; by BOCES sponsored groups, clubs or teams; and at BOCES sponsored events and/or activities whether occurring on or off-campus. Hazing of a student refers to soliciting, encouraging, aiding, or engaging in "hazing" behavior as defined pursuant to BOCES policy, regulation and/or law. The Board of Education shall require the prohibition of hazing - along with the range of possible intervention activities and/or sanctions for such misconduct - to be included in the BOCES *Code of Conduct* for all grade levels.

For purposes of this policy, the term *"hazing" among students is defined as any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of a student to join a group, regardless of their willingness to participate.* Hazing behaviors include, but are not limited to, the following general categories:

- a) Humiliation: socially offensive, isolating or uncooperative behaviors.
- b) Substance abuse: abuse of tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs.
- c) Dangerous hazing: hurtful, aggressive, destructive, and disruptive behaviors.

Incorporated within this definition are various forms of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse which may range in severity from teasing/embarrassing activities to life threatening actions.

Even if the hazing victim participated "willingly" in the activity, or there was no "intent" by the hazer to harm or injure another individual, hazing is still hazing and against BOCES policy, the *BOCES Code of Conduct* and may be in violation of New York State Law. However, hazing of students does not need to rise to the level of criminal activity for such conduct to be in violation of BOCES rules and subject to appropriate disciplinary sanctions. Any hazing activity, whether by an individual or a group, shall be presumed a forced activity and in violation of Board policy, regardless of the "willingness" of the student to participate.

Any student who believes that he/she is being subjected to hazing behavior, as well as students, BOCES employees or third parties who have knowledge of or witness any possible occurrence of hazing, shall report the incident to any staff member or the building principal. Anonymous student complaints of hazing behavior will also be investigated by the BOCES. The staff member/building principal to whom the report is made (or the staff member/building principal who witnesses hazing behavior) shall investigate the complaint/incident and take appropriate action to include, as necessary, referral to the next level of supervisory authority and/or other official designated by the BOCES to investigate allegations of hazing. Investigations of allegations of hazing shall follow the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment within the BOCES. Allegations of hazing shall be promptly investigated and will be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within

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legal constraints. Any steps taken by the Board of Education to address incidents of hazing will not preclude legal action.

Prohibition of Retaliation

The Board of Education prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the investigation of allegations of hazing. Follow-up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged hazer(s) and victim(s) shall be made to ensure that hazing behavior has not resumed and that all those involved in the investigation of allegations of hazing have not suffered retaliation. Any act of retaliation is subject to appropriate disciplinary action by the BOCES.

Knowingly Makes False Accusations

Students who *knowingly* make false accusations against another individual as to allegations of hazing may also face appropriate disciplinary action.

District Responsibility/Training

Personnel at all levels are responsible for taking corrective action to prevent hazing behavior of which they have been made aware at BOCES sites; by school sponsored groups, clubs or teams; and at school sponsored events and/or activities whether occurring on or off-campus. Further, as may be applicable, personnel are to report such hazing behavior to their immediate supervisor. Staff training shall be provided to raise awareness of the problem of hazing within the schools and to facilitate staff identification of, and response to, such hazing behavior among students.

Prevention and intervention techniques within the BOCES to help prevent hazing behavior and to support and protect victims shall include building-level and classroom-level strategies and activities as determined by administration. Individual intervention will be provided by appropriate staff members to hazers, victims and their parents to help ensure that the hazing stops.

Rules against hazing shall be publicized BOCES-wide and shall be disseminated as appropriate to staff, students and parents. Disciplinary sanctions for violation of this policy shall be outlined in the *BOCES Code of Conduct* and may also be incorporated in staff and student handbooks. In addition, allegations of hazing behavior may result in referral to law enforcement officials as necessary.

New York State Penal Law Sections 120.16 and 120.17
Education Law Sections 1709-a, 2503-a, 2554-a, and 2801
8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations
(NYCRR) Section 100.2(l)(2)

Adopted: 12-14-2006