

Policy

## Hazing Policy

### **I. Introduction**

Hazing undermines the mission of the District by contributing to toxic groups and environments where other forms of abuse are more likely to thrive. Hazing threatens students' health and safety due to its intimidating, harassing, and often violent nature. Enacting and upholding clear policies that prohibit hazing is a vital strategy for mitigating harm and even death.

Importantly, anti-hazing policies not only prohibit harmful behavior, they can also shape healthy group behaviors that promote inclusive campus communities to support ethical student leadership, well-being, and belonging.

### **II. Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, "hazing" means:

- As defined by the provisions in RIGL 11-21-1, any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. This conduct shall include, but not be limited to, whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug, or other substance, or any brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of the student or any other person, or which subjects the student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation;
- engaging in any offensive or dangerous physical contact, restraint, abduction, or isolation of a student;
- requiring or encouraging a student to perform any dangerous, painful, offensive, or demeaning physical or verbal act, including the ingestion of any substance; inappropriate exposure to the elements, deprivation of sleep or rest, or extensive isolation;
- subjecting a student to any dangerous, painful, harmful, offensive, or demeaning conduct, or to conduct reasonably likely to create extreme mental distress;
- harassment by exacting unnecessary, disagreeable, or degrading tasks or activities which may result in harm or bodily injury to an individual; or
- to play abusive and humiliating tricks on an individual for the purpose of initiation.

### **III. Policy**

The Chariho Regional School District shall not permit hazing as a condition of membership in, or initiation into, any activity, class, team, group, or organization sponsored by, or permitted to operate under, the auspices of a school of the district.

Hazing is prohibited:

- on school grounds;

- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- at school-sponsored or school-related activities;
- at functions or programs whether on or off school grounds;
- at school bus stops; or
- on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased, or used by the school district.

Hazing is also prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related if the act or acts in question

- Create(s) a hostile environment at school for the target;
- Infringe(s) on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- Materially and substantially disrupt(s) the educational process or the orderly operation of a school; or
- Is intended to be or related to any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person.

Under this policy retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports hazing, related bullying, or provides information during any investigation of hazing and related bullying, or witnesses bullying, or has reliable information about hazing or related bullying.

#### **IV. Protocol**

The Superintendent of Schools will establish protocols and procedures consistent with this policy which shall include:

- Requirement of any employee to report knowledge or allegations of hazing
- Include Hazing Offenses in the Code of Student Behavior
- Addressing the Hazing Policy and expectations in preseason athletic meetings
- Ensuring students know how to report Hazing and related bullying to school administration.
- Ensure the matter is investigated and communication to families is made
- As appropriate, notify local law enforcement

Legal Reference:

[§ 11-21-1 Penalty for hazing.](#)

[§ 11-21-2 Penalty for school official permitting hazing.](#)

[§ 11-21-3. Tattooing or permanent disfigurement.](#)

Adopted and Effective 3/14/23

## Hazing Prevention and Intervention Protocol

### Introduction

#### I. Prohibition against Hazing, Related Bullying and Retaliation

Consistent with the Chariho Regional School Policy, hazing is prohibited:

- On school grounds;
- On property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- At school-sponsored or school-related activities; • At functions or programs whether on or off school grounds;
- At school bus stops;
- On school buses or other vehicles owned, leased, or used by the school district.

Hazing is also prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related if the act or acts in question:

- Create(s) a hostile environment at school for the target;
- Infringe(s) on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- Materially and substantially disrupt(s) the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.
- Is intended to be or related to any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person

Retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports hazing, related bullying, or provides information during an investigation of hazing and related bullying, or witnesses bullying, or has reliable information about hazing or related bullying.

#### II. Definitions

**Aggressor** – a student who engages in behavior that is defined as hazing.

**Bystander** – a person who observes hazing behavior that an individual has witnessed and may or may not assist in the situation.

**Hazing** - any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. This conduct shall include, but not be limited to, whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug, or other substance, or any brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of the student or any other person, or which subjects the student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation. Also, tattooing or knowingly and willfully

permanently disfiguring the body, limbs, or features of any fellow student or person attending the District by the use of nitrate of silver or any like substance, or by any other means

**Perpetrator** – A student or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or support professional who engages in retaliation.

**Retaliation** – prohibited behavior that can take the form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports or provides information about hazing or bullying, or against witnesses or those with information about hazing or bullying.

**Staff** – includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, or support professionals.

**Target** – a student who is the recipient of hazing or bullying, or retaliation. This person is sometimes referred to as the “victim.”

### **III. District Hazing Prevention Philosophy**

Specific steps will be taken to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to hazing and related bullying or harassment. Each school and athletic program works with parents and community partners to establish norms of respect that guide students’ respectful behavior, but also guides the response to hazing and related bullying behavior as either targets or bystanders. Hazing is addressed at all preseason meetings with athletes and families. The staff continually develops the theme of respect in curriculum, classrooms, and school activities under the direction of the principals and with the support of the District Educators.

### **IV. Policy Dissemination**

Each school will provide information about the hazing to parents/families and students in the Student Handbook’s Code of Conduct, which shall include but is not limited to the following:

- (1) That all students are afforded the same legal protections regardless of their status under the law, and are protected against retaliation,
- (2) How to report hazing and related bullying,
- (3) Disciplinary consequences of such behaviors,
- (4) The right to due process, and

(5) That a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of hazing, related bullying or retaliation is also subject to disciplinary action.

## **V. Reporting Protocols**

Reporting protocols provide a safe and easy means of reporting by staff members, targets, bystanders, or parents and allow for anonymous reporting (which legislation requires must be verified before action can be taken). Principals will ensure that all students, staff, and parents understand how to report hazing, and they also provide and publicize a safe and inconspicuous means of reporting anonymously.

Each principal ensures that students understand that bystanders or anyone who becomes aware of hazing or related bullying have an obligation to report, are protected from retaliation, and will have their confidentiality maintained to the extent possible.

### **Annual Reminders about Reporting**

Principals inform parents/families at the beginning of each school year about how to submit a report, and to whom the report is submitted, including the choice of anonymous verbal or written reports. In these yearly reminders, principals provide the definition of hazing, related bullying, the prohibition of hazing bullying, retaliation, as well as the signs of such behaviors.

### **Accessing the Report Form**

The report form is available in all school and district offices as a paper copy and on each school's website as a form that can be printed out and either handwritten or filled in electronically. The form is also linked on the first page of this document.

### **How to File a Report**

Anyone who suspects hazing or related bullying should file a report regardless of whether or not they are absolutely sure what they observed or were told fits the definition of bullying, or if the incident was a repeated offense. (The principal or designee is responsible for making these determinations.)

A bystander or someone who becomes aware of hazing and related bullying may first provide a verbal report to the principal or, in the case of students, to any adult in the school. In any case of verbal reporting, the reporter must provide a written report within a day. If a student notifies an adult in the school, that adult will immediately notify the principal verbally and in writing.

The reporting form is accessed in any school office, on any school's web page, and on the first page of this electronic document. The report may be completed electronically or may be handwritten.

Anyone filing a report has several options:

- Send to the principal/athletic director as an email attachment
- Send via conventional mail (can be anonymous or include reporter's name)
- Hand delivers to the principal's office or to the athletic director's office

The school or school district may create additional means of report submission at any time and will communicate this change to parents or staff.

### **Maintaining Report Records**

Each principal and athletic director shall maintain a record of all reports in a safe and confidential manner.

## **VI. Responding to Reports of Hazing**

### **Protection from Retaliation and Further Hazing**

The principal will take steps necessary to keep the aggressor and target apart during the school day and school events and assess whatever other steps might be necessary to keep the victim safe from further hazing. These steps may include, but are not limited to, requesting teachers to keep students apart during class activities or temporarily re-assigning the aggressor to another class.

Further, the principal will initiate a series of check-ins with the reporter, typically involving an assistant principal and/or school counseling personnel, to ensure protection for any student or staff member who reports hazing. If the reporter is a student, the student's parents will be made aware that he or she has reported hazing so that parents can monitor the student's safety in the hours after school.

### **Investigation**

The principal shall promptly and thoroughly investigate each allegation of hazing, related bullying, and retaliation behaviors. The Chariho Regional School District Investigation Form is used to guide the principal through the investigation process. The principal may elicit school counselors' assistance in interviewing victims if this makes

the victim more comfortable and therefore more likely to disclose details of the hazing behavior directed at him/her.

Unless there are important mitigating circumstances (e.g., report is provided at dismissal, a snowstorm results in early dismissal, the student is absent from school, the investigator goes home sick, etc.), the principal will begin an investigation the same day if the report is received in the morning, or the next day if the report is received in the afternoon. Investigation into reports received on Friday afternoon or the afternoon preceding a day when school is not in session should begin no later than the next school day, and earlier if that is practicable or the situation warrants quick action. The investigation will be concluded as quickly as possible.

The principal must determine through the investigation if the hazing behavior constitutes a violation of other District policy and if so, act in conformance with those policies as well as this protocol.

The investigative process shall be concluded within a maximum of ten (10) school days of receipt of such complaints or reports. If the investigation of a student is conducted by a designee, the principal shall respond in writing to the submission of the final investigation report within three (3) school days, approving the proposed action to be taken or directing further or different action. Designees may appeal for a greater amount of time to complete the requirements of this procedural directive to the individual who originally designated them.

Where violations of criminal law may have occurred, the principal shall report the matter to the law enforcement and immediately notify the Superintendent of the situation.

As appropriate, the District's investigation shall be coordinated with the applicable law enforcement agency, if necessary, and the investigation shall be concluded in the most expeditious manner possible. The final investigation report shall be submitted to the Superintendent for appropriate action.

### **Interviewing the Victim**

Interviews are conducted with two adults present so that one is free to ask questions while paying close attention to the student and the other can take notes. If possible, at least one of the adults should be someone the student knows and trusts. Interviewers of victims, aggressors, and witnesses should utilize open-ended questions and avoid leading questions. Open-ended questions encourage the interviewee to share what they know and feel, and can't be answered with yes/no.

Examples:

- Tell me what happened yesterday.
- What did you do when that happened?
- How did the incident you told me about make you feel?



Closed questions, which ordinarily seek answers of one or a few words, can be asked to clarify or confirm details about which the interviewer is uncertain.

- You told me that this happened yesterday. Was that in the morning or afternoon?
- How many times did that happen?

A leading question prompts the interviewee to respond in a particular way or implies information that may or may not be true and should be avoided.

Examples:

- Did that make you feel badly?
- Tell me how you have been hazed.
- Do you get along with other students?

### **Parent/Family Notification of Hazing Behavior**

Parents/families of both the aggressor and target be given notice promptly upon investigation and determination that hazing, related bullying or retaliation has occurred. Notice may be provided prior to the investigation and determination at the principal's discretion. This notice may be provided verbally and followed up with a letter.

The notice must outline findings at that point, the school's procedures to respond to the bullying or retaliation, and the actions that the school will take to prevent further hazing, bullying or retaliation.

Written and verbal notification to a parent/family about an incident or a report of hazing, related bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations (34 CFR Part 99) and state law.

- (1) A principal may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a parent/family unless the information is about the parent's own child.
- (2) A principal may disclose a determination of hazing to a local law enforcement agency without the consent of a student or his/her parent/family, if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. The principal shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances.
- (3) A principal may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor to appropriate parties in addition to law enforcement in connection with a health or safety emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals. This provision is limited to instances in which the principal has determined there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or

safety of the student or other individuals. It is limited to the period of emergency and does not allow for blanket disclosure of student record information. The principal must document the disclosures and the reasons that the principal determined that a health or safety emergency exists.

(4) A principal shall comply with all mandatory reporting requirements including mandatory notification to the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, & their Families and maintain written records of such compliance.

## **VII. Notification Regarding Aggressors Who Are Not Chariho Students**

If the investigation determines that one or more aggressors or targets attend another school, state charter school, collaborative or residential school, or another district, the principal will notify the principal of the other school(s) so that both may take appropriate action.

## **VIII. Due Process**

If a principal decides after an investigation to apply suspension as a consequence for hazing, related bullying, or retaliation, students and parents may consult the Student Handbook for due process rights, including written notice, right to appeal the decision of the principal to the superintendent.

## **IX. Grievance Process**

Students who feel they have been falsely accused shall follow complaint procedures in the Student Handbook.

## **X. Consequences and Follow Up Actions**

### **Discipline**

Each school's handbook includes developmentally appropriate consequences/disciplinary action for hazing, related bullying, and retaliation. Handbooks shall be accessible on each school's webpage.

When principals have verified that these prohibited activities have occurred, consequences will be applied consistently as defined in the handbook. To ensure that parents have had advance notice of the provisions for hazing in each school's handbook, parents sign an e form that they have read the handbook at the start of the school year. These sign offs are kept on file for the year.

No disciplinary action may be taken before a thorough investigation has occurred. No disciplinary action may be taken on the basis of an anonymous report.

### **Students with Special Needs**

If a student with special needs is determined to be an aggressor and has an Individual Education Plan or a 504 Plan that includes skills and proficiencies to address social skill development, the principal will consult with the Special Education Director (or designee) before determining consequences, which may include a manifestation determination hearing if the accumulated days of suspensions will exceed ten (10).

### **Psychological Support**

Psychological support will not require mandatory mediation or any attempt to bring the target and aggressor together to discuss the matter. Since hazing occurs in situations where the perception of power is unequal, these approaches are not advised, and may do further harm to the target. Both the target and the aggressor require psychological support following verified hazing, but their needs differ.

### **Target**

In all cases of verified hazing or related bullying, the district will offer the support of a district guidance counselor, clinician, or psychologist to assess the student's needs and to support him/her during the period of adjustment after the matter has been resolved. Counseling will continue until the counselor is reasonably certain that the student is able to focus on his/her schoolwork and participate in and fully access school activities and programming.

### **Reporter**

At times a reporter will need psychological support to move successfully on from the emotional impact of coming forward. In cases where the reporter has suffered trauma, the district's counselors or clinicians may be asked to counsel or make recommendations for outside counsel.

### **Aggressor**

Aggressors require (1) direct teaching about appropriate pro-social behavior, and (2) school counseling to help them stop their hazing and bullying related behavior and prevent additional students from becoming victims.

## **XI. Monitoring and Evaluating Hazing Data**

**Reporting Requirements** Principals will report on hazing data to the superintendent by June 30th each year using a common district report template.

## **Finding Root Causes and Identifying Solutions**

The district and school administration work with staff to evaluate hazing prevention efforts, using the data collected each year. The principals (and Director of Special Education if children with special needs are involved) will organize the staff to search for root causes if behavior is not decreasing and to determine appropriate solutions to address the root causes. This information will be part of the annual hazing report.

### **All Staff**

All staff members are responsible for demonstrating and encouraging respectful behavior, learning the signs of bullying and hazing, intervening to stop any observed behaviors, and reporting behaviors discovered (either observed directly or behavior that has been reported).

### **Parents**

(1) All parents/families are responsible for reading the information that the district provides on hazing, bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and reporting any of this activity that they may witness or learn about.

(2) Parents/families of targets are also responsible for reporting any hazing, bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliatory behavior directed at their children so that the school can address this behavior.

(3) Parents/families of aggressors are responsible for partnering with the school to help their child understand the consequences of his/her hazing/bullying and to change his/her behavior.

### **Students**

All students are expected to demonstrate respectful behavior and report hazing rather than remain a passive bystander. Students are responsible for reporting hazing, related bullying, or retaliatory behavior to a staff member in the school.

## **Laws and Regulations**

Rhode Island Anti-Hazing Law § 11-21-1 Penalty for hazing.; § 11-21-2 Penalty for school official permitting hazing.; § 11-21-3. Tattooing or permanent disfigurement.

Federal anti-discrimination statutes enforced by the Office of Civil Rights include: Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and/or Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990