



HAZING PREVENTION GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES



SEWANEE
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

STUDENT LIFE

DISCUSSING HAZING

College life can overwhelm many new students, especially with new social environments and changing academic expectations. While many freedoms come with being a college student, there is also increased responsibility. You play an integral role in your students' involvement experience as a support system for growth and independence and a guide to help them through critical situations.

You are encouraged to have regular, direct conversations with your student about health and safety issues to help them understand their seriousness and set expectations for what you deem acceptable behavior.

Studies show that parents, families, and friends are often the first groups with whom students share their hazing experiences. It is essential to be knowledgeable about hazing, why it is a serious issue, and [how to report it](#). We all have a responsibility to help stop hazing. Families need to be familiar with the realities of hazing on college campuses across the country.

National studies have found:

- More than half (55%) of college students involved in clubs, teams, and organizations experience hazing.
- Nearly half (47%) of students have experienced hazing before coming to college.

If your student discloses a hazing experience, or you suspect hazing has occurred, we urge you to talk with your student and report your concerns to the University.



THE ISSUE OF HAZING

Parents and families are often the first people outside the organization's membership that students will talk to about possible hazing. This guide includes tools to help you recognize hazing, understand your responsibility to help prevent it and offer resources for reporting and support.

Hazing can occur in any group or student organization, including athletic teams, performing arts groups, faith-based organizations, and fraternities and sororities.



The fact that a person consents to be hazed is not a defense. Peer pressure and the desire to belong can create a coercive environment that impedes true consent.

In general, behaviors that are considered hazing adversely affect the emotional, mental, and physical health and safety of the person and span across a spectrum. A list of examples of hazing behaviors can be found at hazing.sewanee.edu. Ultimately, hazing takes place in environments where power dynamics within a group are emphasized.

WHAT IS HAZING?

Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them, regardless of their willingness to participate.

HAZING INCLUDES THREE COMPONENTS

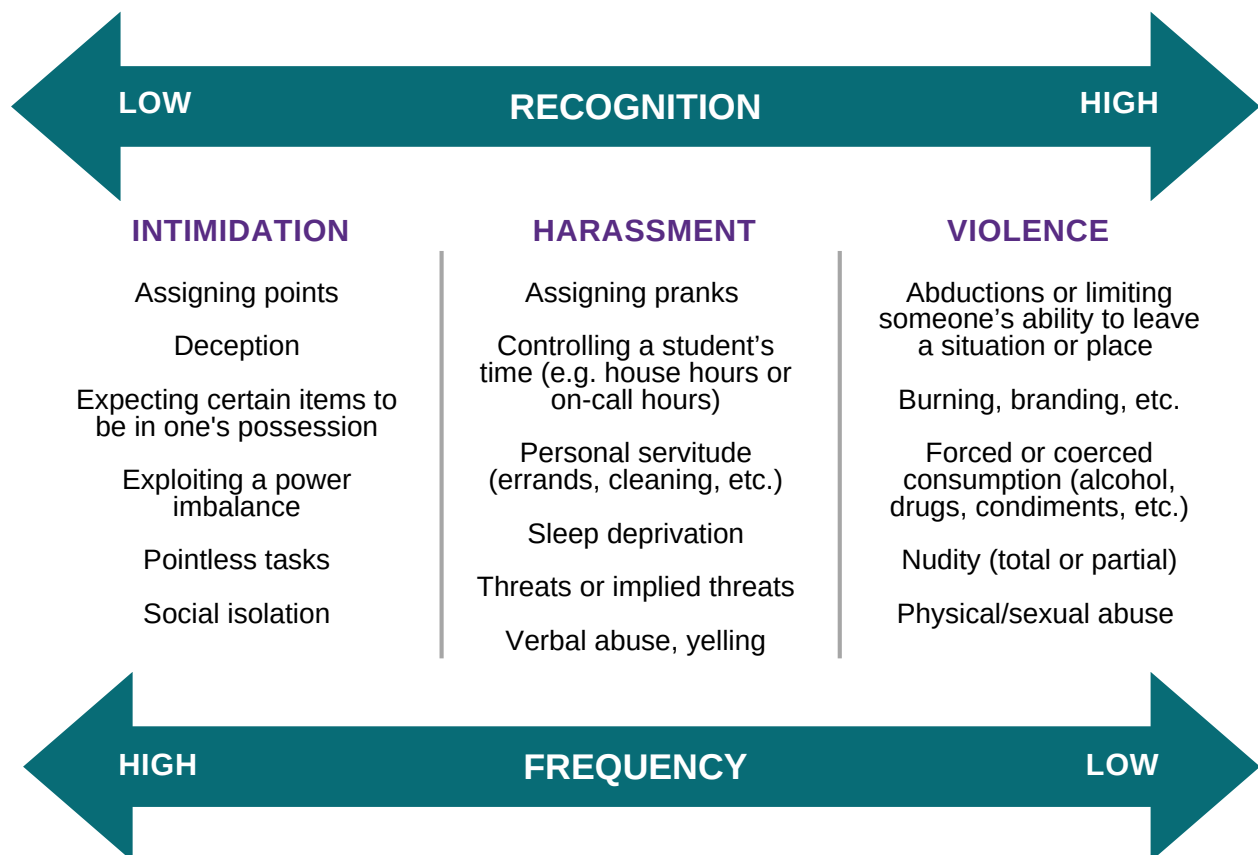
- It occurs in a group context
- It can be humiliating, degrading, or endangering behavior
- It happens regardless of an individual's willingness to participate

Visit hazing.sewanee.edu for more information.

(Allan & Madden, 2008; Hoover, 1999)

The figure below depicts the spectrum of hazing. It distinguishes forms of hazing and levels of harm that involve intimidation and humiliation from those that constitute harassment and those that involve violence. Each type of hazing also falls on a continuum based on how readily people recognize the behavior as hazing and how frequently it occurs. This visual portrays how intimidation forms of hazing (e.g., social isolation, demeaning names, expecting items to always be in one's possession) are hazing behaviors least recognized as hazing, yet they may occur most frequently. This is in contrast to violence forms of hazing (e.g., beating, paddling, or other forms of assault; branding; forced consumption of alcohol or other drugs), which are likely to be recognized as hazing, but may occur less frequently.

THE SPECTRUM OF HAZING



(Allan, 2015; Allan & Kerschner, 2020; Adapted from Bringing in the Bystander®)

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Be honest with yourself. As you think about the possibility of your student, or any student, being hazed, it's normal to feel a range of difficult emotions. Reflect on how this emotional upset might impact your ability to delve into the topic.

Ask yourself:

- How do I respond to thinking about my teen being hazed? Do I get super anxious and start lecturing them, desperately trying to protect them?
- Do I rationalize ("They would never subject themselves to that. They would walk away. Their friends are all good kids.") and assume there is no way it would happen to my kid?
- What strategies can I use to regulate my feelings and prepare myself and my young adult for this conversation?

Normalize your student's intense need to belong—a normal part of brain development. Help your student understand that hazing often happens regardless of consent and that this is because the need to belong, coupled with the power of peer pressure, impedes true consent.

Ask yourself:

- How can I talk about the pros and cons of their drive to belong?
- How might their need to belong put them at risk for hazing or being hazed?

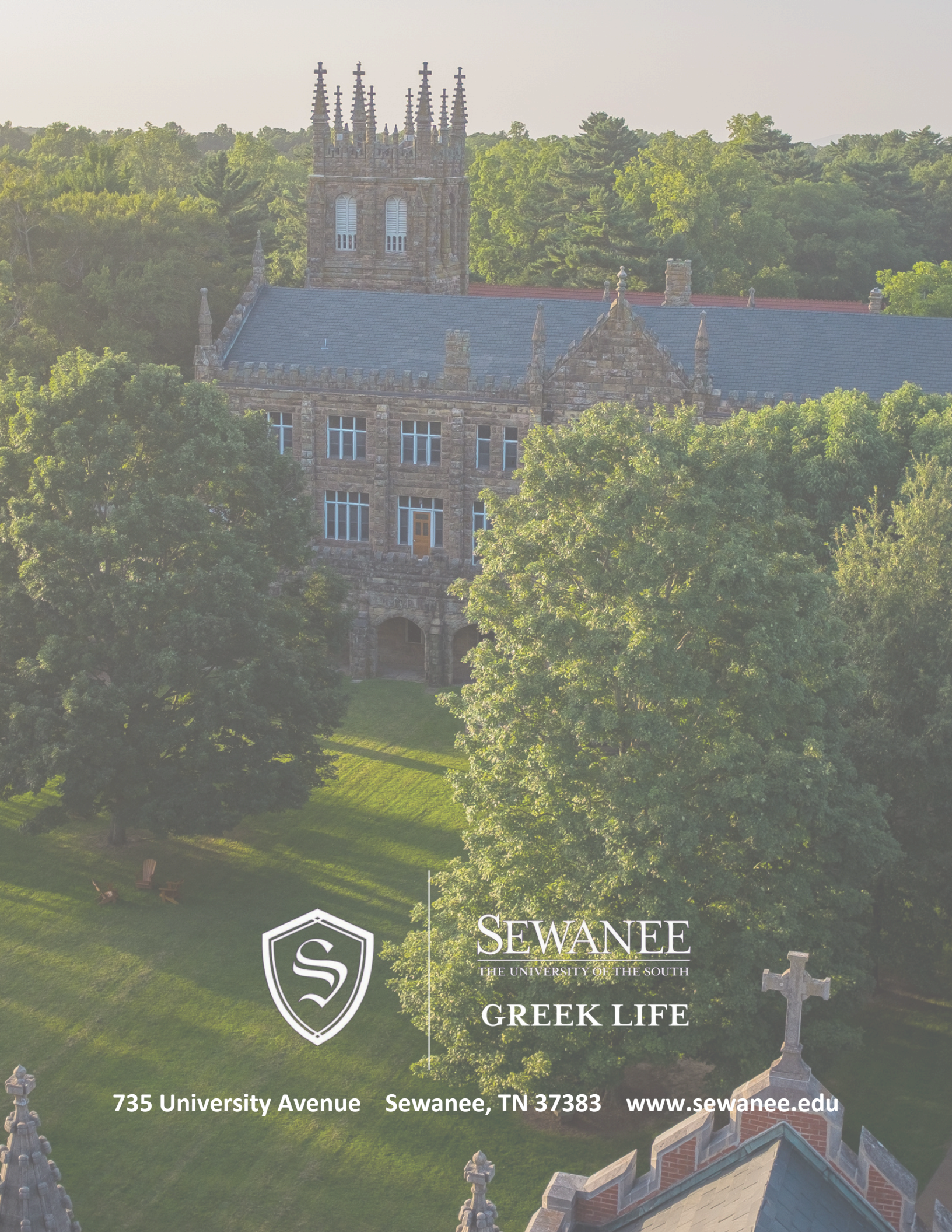
Know the facts about hazing and talk about them. Students often accept the risks associated with hazing to avoid the fear of social isolation. Knowing this underscores why it is essential to speak with your student about their need to belong while also discussing the facts about hazing. You can familiarize yourself with hazing information by visiting hazing.sewanee.edu.

KEEPING THE CONVERSATION GOING

Hazing will not go away or disappear on its own. It will be eliminated when enough people take action. Using the tips above, we encourage you to continue to discuss this topic with your student, especially during the new member process. Consistently reinforce the consequences of hazing and ensure your student knows where to go for help.

Information Sources:

1. Favor and Company. (2020). FHSI Guide for Parents 2020. Retrieved from <https://favorandcompany.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/FHSI-Guide-for-Parents-2020.pdf>
2. StopHazing. (2023, July 20). 10 Tips for Talking with Your Teen. Stop Hazing. Retrieved from <https://stophazing.org/2023/07/20/10-tips-for-talking-with-your-teen/>



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