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Module 3 Question – Anti-Hazing Message

Introduction

Hazing has become a wide spread problem among high school athletes. Two different surveys, the first performed in 2000 and the second in 2008, provide that more than 40% of high school athletes have incurred a form of hazing (“Rite Answers” 2000 & “More Hands Needed” 2008). With the findings of both surveys very similar, it shows that hazing has not subsided in the last twelve years. It is time to begin eliminating negative team rituals that fall into the category of hazing. In order to eliminate the problem, coaches, administrators, and athletes need to be aware of what hazing actually is and the possible outcomes of such actions. Chances are that hazing is occurring, although it may not be seen in a negative light which could ultimately lead to unfortunate outcomes. Negative consequences associated with hazing could include mental distress, physical harm, lack of participation in sport, legal issues, among others. All of these consequences can be prevented and as coaches and administrators it is our job to help protect student-athletes from these negative events. As a school district, please consider the following proposal to help eliminate hazing among our student-athletes.

Definition

Hazing is defined in the State of Michigan under Public Act 111 and 112 as an intentional, knowing, or reckless act by a person who acted alone or with others that was directed against an individual and that person knew or should have known would endanger the physical health or safety of the individual, and that was done for the purpose of affiliation with, participation in, or maintaining membership in any organization (2004).

Not only the physical well-being of the student-athlete, but also the emotional well-being needs to be taken into account. Any activity that is not directly related to the sport performance may be a form of hazing. Any activity that degrades, embarrasses, humiliates, or endangers an athlete or student is hazing.

Using this definition as a basis for hazing encompasses many activities that may be performed by our athletes, mainly team initiations. Team initiations are not directly related to the sport performance and need to be monitored. Acceptable and unacceptable team events will be discussed further.

Coaches and staff members need to be aware of the characteristics of hazing and take the proper steps to eliminate negative outcomes. The events need to be taken into context, but also need to be discussed fully to help negative instances subside.

Acceptable Team Events

Acceptable team events are those that reward and encourage proper sport performance and character. Examples of acceptable team events are as follows:

- Team Banquets
- Monitored Team Building Activities
- Unpressured Team Gatherings within the spectrum of the law
- Sport Competitions

Unacceptable Team Events

Unacceptable team events are those that create a situation that may harm, embarrass, humiliates, and/or degrades a student-athlete or a group of student athletes. Examples of unacceptable team events are as follows:

- Team Initiations of any type
- Selected players exclusively cleaning up all equipment (*Only freshmen continuously putting away tackling dummies*)
- Athletes performing an act in poor taste to be accepted on the team (*Naked push-ups, Dressing awkwardly, etc.*)
- Team gatherings such as alcohol parties, binge drinking, drugs, etc.
- Athletes being pressured to perform an action unrelated to the sport performance (*Head shaving, tattoos, etc.*)
- Name calling or any other verbal abuse
- Sexual Harassment
- Assault of any type
- Negative Peer Pressure

**Unacceptable team events are not meant to discourage togetherness or any form of solidarity. These events need to be taken into context of the overall event. However, building togetherness needs to be done in an acceptable, positive manner which allows the team members to build positive characteristics as a whole.

Punishments

Punishments for hazing will follow the suspensions outlined in the athletic code as well as hazing specific punishments.

- First Offense: Suspension for 20% of current or next athletic season, whichever comes first. Written apology to the team, and affected member of the team and family.
- Second Offense: Suspension for one full sport season. Written apology to the team, affected member of the team and family, and school board. Student will research hazing and provide results to a panel appropriated to the case.
- Third Offense: Suspension for one calendar year. Student will undergo counseling in regards to the effects of hazing.
- Fourth Offense: Complete suspension from further athletic participation. Student will be referred to the court system.

**Any and all legal matters will be taken into account. Hazing is not a matter in which to let slide. If an incident is found to be of major consequence, a panel will be appointed to take further action towards the student-athlete. Depending on the severity of the incident, further action may be deemed necessary. If necessary, a student may be assigned to serve a more severe punishment than the sequence of offenses stipulates. A panel will make the final determination. Examples that may lead to further punishment include serious injury or harm, major destruction of property, legal consequences, among other similar events.

Awareness

The anti-hazing message will be included in the athletic code which will be agreed to and signed by both the student-athlete and parent or guardian. The definition of hazing will be posted in the locker rooms and around all athletic areas as a reminder to student-athletes to behave properly. In order to raise awareness to the message, all coaches will be required to discuss the policy during the season opening

parent meeting. It will also be discussed at the athletic code evening corresponding with the introduction to the sport season teams. As the message is portrayed, outgoing senior athletes will be asked to perform an exit survey regarding their experiences with hazing. All results will help the district take the proper steps to eliminate hazing in the future.

References

The following website is designed to raise awareness of hazing. It includes an abundance of information as it pertains to hazing. It also includes a short quiz that could be beneficial to understanding the many aspects of hazing.

www.hazing.fsu.edu