



Saint Vincent's Anti-Hazing Policy

Policy:

Saint Vincent's is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and healing environment for the youth and families we serve, free of intimidation or coercion of any manner. Accordingly, Saint Vincent's prohibits hazing of any kind, defined by M.G.L., Chapter 269, Section 17 as: "any conduct or method of initiation into any youth organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any youth or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug, or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such youth or other person, or which subjects such youth or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation". Saint Vincent's prohibits hazing regardless of whether the targeted person consents to such activity. Saint Vincent's complies with all requirements of M.G.L. related to the prevention and reporting of incidences of hazing.

Procedure:

1. On an annual basis, Saint Vincent's distributes to each youth team or other organized group of youth, a copy of Sections 17-19, of M.G.L., Section 269, related to hazing. The staff leader of each group reviews the material with the group of youth, ensuring that each youth signs an acknowledgement of having received a copy of the material, and understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of Sections 17-19.
2. If the staff leader of the youth group determines that an individual youth does not fully comprehend the provisions and requirements of the law, the staff leader will consult with the youth's treatment/educational team to ensure that the youth is offered the assistance needed to ensure reasonable understanding of what is required of him/her.
3. The Special Education Administrator or designee will ensure that each full-time youth and his/her guardian receives a copy of Sections 17-19 upon enrollment in one of Saint Vincent's DESE-approved special education programs; reviews the expectations contained within the sections; and obtains a written acknowledgement from the youth and guardian about having received and reviewed the material.
4. A copy of Saint Vincent's Anti-Hazing policy is also included within the youth/guardian handbook, and both youth and guardian acknowledge in writing having received the handbook.
5. In accordance with M.G.L. 269, Section 19, Saint Vincent's will file a report annually with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) certifying that the agency has complied with its responsibilities to: inform youth groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time enrolled youth of the provisions of Sections 17-19; adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to organizers and participants of hazing; has incorporated the hazing and disciplinary policies with appropriate emphasis in the youth handbook.
6. Youth who have knowledge of or witness hazing as defined by M.G.L. 269, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to him/herself or others, are required to report the incident to a Saint Vincent's staff member or other responsible adult, as soon as possible. Saint Vincent's will conduct a timely review of any suspected incidents of hazing, and will intervene immediately to maintain the safety of all youth. Saint Vincent's will take actions, as needed, to protect any youth or staff that reports hazing from retaliation of any kind. If it is determined that a youth or group of youth have participated in hazing of another youth, the organizers of hazing will be subject to Saint Vincent's youth disciplinary process, in consultation with the youth's educational/treatment team and law enforcement officials. Disciplinary action may include suspension or termination from Saint Vincent's programs and is in addition to any action taken by law enforcement officials.
7. Any Saint Vincent's employee who is notified of a suspected incident of hazing is required to take immediate action to ensure the safety of all youth; to report that incident to a supervisor immediately; and to ensure that a report is made to an appropriate law enforcement official. Additionally, staff members must comply with all requirements of Saint Vincent's policies regarding the reporting of suspected abuse or neglect of children. Failure on the part of an employee to adhere to Saint Vincent's anti-hazing policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Additionally, any staff member involved in hazing of a youth will be subject to whatever actions resulting from the agency reporting the incident to the Department of Children and Families and law enforcement officials.