**Hazing Scenario**

*For guidelines on facilitating a tabletop exercise, including developing goals, objectives, rules, after-action reports, and follow-up actions, please see United Educators’* [*Crisis Response Planning: A Facilitators Guide for Conducting Tabletop Exercises*](https://www.ue.org/risk-management/the-workplace/crisis-response-testing-resources-tabletop-exercises/)*.*

Scenario

[](https://vimeo.com/866400003/9789444f05)

[*Launch Video*](https://vimeo.com/866400003/9789444f05) *(hold the “Control” key down while clicking this link if you’re using Windows)*

Your school’s highly competitive women’s soccer team holds a two-week intensive preseason camp over the summer. This year, camp participants include five first-year players.

At 6 a.m. Aug. 14, local police contact your Head of Security. They were called by distraught parents of Amanda, a first-year player brought unconscious to the emergency room. An assistant coach conducting a curfew check found the girl alone in her room the prior day at 10 p.m., unresponsive, and covered in vomit. When Amanda was taken to the hospital, the emergency room physician diagnosed her with severe alcohol poisoning and began treatment.

The Head Coach locates the other first-year players, all obviously still drunk but relatively lucid. They tell her that every night of camp, the older players have pressured them to take part in a drinking game by insisting it was a “tradition” and an important team-bonding experience. The game requires new players on the team to drink six shots each the first night and increase the total every night.

The new players say that last night, once they were intoxicated, they were blindfolded and told to strip to their underwear. Then the older players scribbled demeaning slogans on their bodies with black marker while laughing and taking pictures.

Amanda hasn’t regained consciousness, and her parents demand a criminal investigation. The President asks the crisis response team to meet at 8 a.m. Aug. 14.

Your school has written policies against underage drinking and hazing.

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| Discussion questions:   * Would your crisis response plan be activated in this situation? * What information should the crisis response team gather, and from which school departments or officials? * How does your school’s policy define hazing? Would it cover conduct alleged here? * Is your attorney a member of the crisis response team? If not, would the team contact the attorney immediately for advice? Would the answer be different if police weren’t involved? * Would the school rely solely on police to investigate, or would it also conduct an internal investigation? * Given the police involvement, how quickly do you anticipate the press will learn about this matter? Have you identified a spokesperson and considered appropriate statements for the media, the school community, and other stakeholders? |

Inject 1

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[*Launch Video*](https://vimeo.com/866402054/b1847c37c5) *(hold the “Control” key down while clicking this link if you’re using Windows)*

At 1 p.m. Aug. 14, police identify eight sophomores, juniors, and seniors who took part in the hazing. They find evidence that several of them posted pictures of the blindfolded players on Facebook, with captions identifying the victims by name and containing slogans such as “stupid drunken sluts.”

All eight students eventually admit some involvement but deny forcing anyone to participate. They also claim the team’s coaches “know” about the camp ritual and allow it by looking the other way. The Head Coach and one assistant deny any such knowledge, but another assistant refuses to answer police questions on her lawyer’s advice.

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| Discussion questions:   * How should your school interact with the police, especially if they want to interview school officials? * Does the situation call for retaining an outside crisis communications expert? * Did the coaching staff or the players receive training on your school’s anti-hazing policy or its policy against underage drinking? * Does your school have a social media use policy that the Facebook postings may have violated? * Under your crisis response plan, who will your school designate to remain in touch with Amanda’s parents and offer your school’s continuing support? How is Amanda doing now? |

Inject 2

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[*Launch Video*](https://vimeo.com/866401709/ab334b0cd9) *(hold the “Control” key down while clicking this link if you’re using Windows)*

At 11 a.m. Aug. 17, a reporter confronts the school’s Athletic Director (AD) in a parking lot. The AD says he doesn’t believe “anything illegal” happened and points to the school’s anti-hazing policy. He suggests the episode with the soccer team was “some kind of misunderstanding” that was “blown out of proportion.”

When the reporter continues pressing, the AD becomes flustered and says that he himself was hazed on his college baseball team and it “didn’t do me lasting harm.”

Amanda’s parents respond with their own interview in which they attack the school for failing to protect their daughter from abuse and demand that the President fire the AD and the women’s soccer coaching staff.

To school leaders’ surprise and dismay, the parents’ interview is followed by one of a board member, who says she is disgusted by the hazing allegations and agrees with the parents’ demand for terminations.

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| Discussion questions:   * Should the President, the Communications Director, or another school official try to explain the AD’s remarks? * Should the AD be asked or pressured to apologize for making them? * How, if at all, should the school react to the interview given by Amanda’s parents? * Is a formal statement appropriate, or is it preferable to have a school official reach out to them directly? * If you previously didn’t feel an external crisis communications expert was justified, has this changed? Why? * Would anyone on the crisis response team consult with the administration about possible personnel actions due to the developments? |

Inject 3

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[*Launch Video*](https://vimeo.com/866401422/2c102579ee) *(hold the “Control” key down while clicking this link if you’re using Windows)*

A local TV station does an exposé on the soccer team at 5 p.m. Aug. 21. It includes interviews with half a dozen former players who all say they were subjected to similar treatment during preseason camp. Most kept quiet because they viewed the ritual as the price of being on the team. However, one former player said that several years previously, she confided about her hazing experience to a faculty member, who has since become Assistant Dean.

After the story airs, more reporters show up on campus, trying to interview students and employees. Meanwhile, the police announce they won’t file criminal charges.

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| Discussion questions:   * Should your school release a statement responding to the TV piece? If so, what should the statement contain? * Can or should something be done about the reporters coming on campus? * Has your school searched for records involving any past internal investigations or complaints of hazing on the women’s soccer team? * Should your school investigate the former student’s allegation about the current Assistant Dean? |

Inject 4

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[*Launch Video*](https://vimeo.com/866401298/e58f7e19ff) *(hold the “Control” key down while clicking this link if you’re using Windows)*

Your school holds internal student disciplinary hearings at 1 p.m. Sept. 19. Most starters from the previous season are suspended from the team and unsuccessfully appeal the suspensions. Three of them file lawsuits against your school, claiming it failed to follow its own disciplinary procedures and that your school defamed them because the police didn’t file criminal charges.

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| Discussion questions:   * What is Amanda’s current condition? How are her parents doing? Has your school continued to offer the family support and show its concern? * Do team members believe any school policies or procedures should be revised due to this experience? If so, what changes are most important to make? * What can the crisis response team do to help prevent a similar hazing episode in the future? |

Potential Alterations to the Scenario

1. Amanda’s parents don’t call the police, so it’s up to your institution to decide whether to involve them. Does the crisis response plan provide guidance in these circumstances? If not, what factors does the team believe should be considered?
2. Although an assistant coach refused to speak to the police, a school official who is a member of the crisis response team learns this assistant was aware of the hazing and seemed to condone it, instructing the older players, “Just be sure you don’t get caught.” Should this information be shared with police or anyone else?
3. Amanda never regains consciousness and dies 10 days after being admitted to the hospital. Would this change the way the crisis response team handles the matter? Does it make any difference if, following Amanda’s death, police file criminal charges against the old players responsible for the hazing?