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Hazing in Schools:

A New Reporting Mandate Takes Effect in January

Act 87 of 2026 was signed into law on October 22, 2026, and officially goes into effect on January 20, 2027. The law addresses hazing and is not an amendment to the Pennsylvania School Code but is a change to the Child Protective Services Act.

Under the new law all mandated reporters will now be required to report in the same way as other child abuse cases if the mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect school hazing or aggravated hazing. The law does not change the statutory definition of hazing; rather, it expands the definition of "child abuse" to explicitly include hazing as a reportable offense.

The legal definition of hazing remains governed by the Anti-Hazing Law (18 Pa. C.S. § 2802). Under that law a person commits the offense of hazing if they intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly force, coerce, or cause a minor (an individual under 18 years old) or a student (anyone who attends a secondary school) to perform certain acts for the purpose of: initiation or admission into an organization, affiliation with an organization, or continuing or enhancing their membership or status in an organization. The definition of organization includes clubs, or service or similar groups whose members are primarily minors or a public school which provides instruction in grades 7 through 12). The statute specifies that hazing occurs if a minor or a student is forced to do any of the following:

- Violate federal or state criminal law.
- Consume any food, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug, or other substance which subjects the minor or student to a risk of physical or emotional harm.
- Endure brutality of a physical nature including whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, or deliberate exposure to the elements.
- Endure brutality of a mental nature including activity adversely affecting the mental health or dignity of the individual, sleep deprivation, exclusion from social contact or conduct that could result in extreme humiliation.
- Endure brutality of a sexual nature.
- Endure any other activity that creates a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury.

A person commits the offense of aggravated hazing, if a person engages in hazing that results in serious bodily injury or death and:

1. The person acts with reckless indifference to the health and safety of a minor or student; or
2. The person causes, coerces or forces the consumption of an alcoholic liquid or drug by the minor or student.

Make sure your staff is aware of this expansion in their mandatory reporting obligation.

Clients who have questions regarding issues discussed in this article, or any education law matter, should feel free to call us at 215-345-9111.