



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

## MEMORANDUM

**To: Principals and Headmasters of Middle and High Schools, Charter School Leaders, Directors of Educational Collaboratives, Directors of Private Schools, Superintendents of Schools**

**From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.,  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Date: June 1, 2010**

**Subject: Reminder about Massachusetts Law Prohibiting the Practice of Hazing**

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As part of the Commonwealth's effort to support safe school environments for students, I want to take this opportunity to remind public and private secondary school leaders of the requirements in state law and regulation prohibiting the practice of hazing, and to offer guidance on ways to meet those requirements.

The anti-hazing law, which was enacted in 1985, applies only to *secondary schools* in Massachusetts. Please note that a public middle school that has been designated as secondary school by the school committee must comply with the anti-hazing law and regulations.

Under [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 269, Sections 17-19](#) and [603 CMR 33.00](#), all secondary schools, both public and private, must:

- adopt anti-hazing policies as part of their disciplinary policies, and
- distribute copies of the anti-hazing law to all students enrolled full-time; to all student groups, teams, and organizations that are part of or are recognized by the school, or are permitted by the school to use its name and facilities; and to all known unaffiliated student groups, teams, or organizations.

Every year, secondary school principals or headmasters must:

- collect a signed acknowledgement from a contact person for each student organization regarding distribution of information and agreement to comply with the law, and
- submit a report to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ("the Department") certifying that the school has complied with the law. The reports must be filed with the Department on or before October 1. By November 1, the Department must notify the Attorney General of any school that has not filed a report.

We assume that secondary school administrators routinely include the anti-hazing information in the school's discipline code/student handbook, or in other such information that is distributed to students. A secondary school will meet the requirement to distribute information about the anti-hazing law to students if it can document that its student handbook includes the anti-hazing law (M.G.L. c. 269, §§ 17-19) and that all students have received a copy of the handbook. Please review your school discipline code/student handbook to be sure it includes the anti-hazing law and

any policies that your school or district has adopted to prevent and address hazing.

We also assume that secondary school administrators routinely notify and receive acknowledgement from all school affiliated and non-school affiliated student groups, teams, and organizations of the provisions of the anti-hazing law, as required. To assist in the documentation of this, the Department has developed the attached form that principals or headmasters may give to the designated officer or contact person of each such group or team. Each year, the secondary school principal or headmaster must collect a signed copy of this statement from each officer or contact person, and keep it on file to demonstrate compliance with this aspect of the law.

As noted earlier, each secondary school principal or headmaster must certify to the Department each year, on or before October 1, that the school has met the requirements of the anti-hazing law. To help with this process, the attached Anti-hazing Report form is for your use and convenience. This form may be submitted to the Department in paper or electronic format. By November 1, the Department is required to notify the Attorney General of any secondary school that has not filed an anti-hazing report.

The guidance in this memorandum is intended to ensure that all public and private secondary schools meet their obligations under this important law and that students know the rules, expectations, and consequences regarding hazing. If you need additional information about the anti-hazing law and secondary schools' responsibilities, please contact Program Quality Assurance at 781-338-3700.

Attachment 1: M.G.L. c. 269, §§ 17-19

Attachment 2: Annual Statement of Acknowledgement for Student Groups, Teams, and Organizations

Attachment 3: Secondary School Annual Anti-Hazing Report