

EC 48900(q) — Hazing

Definition, meaning, and school-setting examples to support administrator fact-finding

GENERAL LEGAL EXPLANATION FOR ADMINISTRATOR USE — BASED ON EC 48900(q) AND RELATED HAZING STATUTES

Statutory meaning

Under EC 48900(q), a student may be disciplined when they engage in, or attempt to engage in, hazing. "Hazing" is defined as a method of initiation or pre-initiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized, that is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. Athletic events or school-sanctioned events are expressly excluded.

In plain language

Hazing is not just teasing or ordinary misbehavior. It is a harmful initiation or pre-initiation activity tied to joining or staying in a group — such as a club, team, or informal student organization — that is likely to seriously hurt a student or humiliate them in a way that causes physical or mental harm. It can apply even when the group is not officially recognized by the school and even when the student appears willing to participate.

Core elements to check

- Connection to initiation or pre-initiation into a pupil organization or body.
- Method or activity likely to cause serious bodily injury OR personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm.
- The pupil is a former, current, or prospective member of the group.
- The activity is not a customary athletic event or other school-sanctioned event.

Examples in a school setting

- Older students require new members of an unofficial club to run a physical "gauntlet" of punches and kicks in the locker room as part of initiation.
- Team members force a prospective player to perform humiliating acts on video, then circulate the video to peers as part of "earning" a place in the group.
- Members of a student group pressure a new student to drink dangerous amounts of liquid, or endure sleep deprivation, to prove their commitment to the organization.
- Students require a prospective member to endure repeated insults and degrading tasks in front of classmates as part of joining the group.

When EC 48900(q) does not fit

- Ordinary roughhousing or peer conflict that is unrelated to membership, initiation, or pre-initiation into a group.
- Customary athletic practices or school-sanctioned events that follow safety rules and do not involve degrading or harmful initiation rituals.
- A single act of bullying, harassment, or assault that is not tied to joining, affiliating with, or remaining in a pupil organization or body.

Administrator check

When considering EC 48900(q), identify the group, confirm that the conduct is part of initiation or pre-initiation, determine whether serious injury or personal degradation is likely, and verify that the activity is not merely a school-sanctioned athletic or other approved event. If those elements are not present, another Education Code section may better capture the conduct.

Training reference only. Use the district's approved Codex resources and legal review for final discipline decisions.