

Hazing Case Study Scenario #5

Medium Public University – NPHC Organization

The Context:

Piedmont State University (PSU) is a medium-sized public institution with approximately 18,000 students, of which about 15,000 are undergraduates. Located in a mid-sized city in the southeastern United States, PSU has a diverse student body with approximately 45% white students, 30% Black students, 12% Latinx students, 8% Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 5% multiracial or other identities. The university has a strong residential campus culture, with approximately 40% of undergraduates living in on-campus housing, and an active student life scene centered around athletics, student organizations, and Greek life.

PSU's fraternity and sorority life community includes approximately 10% of undergraduates affiliated across 22 chapters representing the Interfraternity Council (IFC | 8 chapters), Panhellenic Council (PHC | 7 chapters), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC | 5 chapters), and Multicultural Greek Council (MGC | 2 chapters). The NPHC community, which includes members of the Divine Nine organizations, holds a significant and respected place in campus culture and the local community, with strong alumni connections and a legacy of civil rights activism, community service, and academic excellence. NPHC chapters operate without on-campus housing but maintain active chapter rooms in the student union and regularly use campus spaces for meetings and programs. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life includes a Director and two Assistant Directors, one of whom specifically coordinates support for NPHC and MGC chapters and serves as a liaison to the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

The Situation:

Alpha Beta Gamma (ABG) fraternity, a historically Black fraternity and member of NPHC, conducted its membership intake process during the fall semester and was in the process of bringing in a line of six new members. The organization is known on campus for its step performances, community mentorship programs with local Black youth, and strong academic achievement among its members. Many Alpha Beta Gamma members are involved in campus leadership, including student government, Black Student Union, and various academic honor societies.

In mid-October, a resident assistant named Jordan was conducting routine evening rounds in one of the residence halls when a student, Tyler, approached Jordan in the hallway and asked to speak privately. Tyler appeared visibly concerned and explained that he needed to talk to someone about his roommate, Jamal. Tyler shared that over the past two weeks, he had observed Jamal coming back to their room late at night with visible injuries and appearing to be in significant pain.

Tyler described noticing that Jamal had bruising on Jamal's arms, shoulders, and back, which he had seen when Jamal changed clothes in their room. Tyler also observed that Jamal was walking with a limp and seemed stiff when sitting down or getting up from his desk. On at least two occasions, Tyler heard Jamal on the phone with his mother making excuses about why he couldn't come home for the weekend, saying he was "busy with fraternity stuff" even though Jamal wasn't yet an initiated member of any organization. Tyler mentioned that Jamal had been leaving the residence hall late at night, often around 11:00 PM or midnight, and not returning until 2:00 or 3:00 AM. When Tyler asked Jamal if everything was okay, Jamal insisted he was fine and said he was "going through a process" to join a fraternity.

Most concerning to Tyler was an incident that occurred three nights prior to his conversation with Jordan. Jamal returned to the room around 2:30 AM, and Tyler woke up to hear Jamal in pain. When Tyler turned on the light, he saw that Jamal had fresh bruising on his upper arms and thighs that looked like fingerprint marks, as well as what appeared to be bruising consistent with being hit with a paddle or similar object on his legs. Jamal's was limping significantly. Tyler offered to take Jamal to the campus health center or call for help, but Jamal became defensive and insisted that Tyler "didn't

understand" and needed to "stay out of it." Jamal told Tyler that he "chose to do this" and that it was "part of becoming a brother" in an organization that meant everything to him and his family.

Tyler explained to Jordan that he was genuinely worried about Jamal's safety and well-being but felt conflicted about reporting the situation. Tyler mentioned that he knew Jamal was interested in joining Alpha Beta Gamma because Jamal had talked excitedly about attending interest meetings earlier in the semester and had family members who were ABGs. Tyler expressed concern that if he reported what he observed, Jamal would be angry with him and might face negative consequences from the fraternity members. However, Tyler also felt that the injuries he observed were significant and that someone needed to intervene.

Jordan, following their training as a mandatory reporter, documented Tyler's report and immediately contacted the Residence Life Coordinator on duty, who then notified the Dean of Students Office. The university's hazing policy requires immediate investigation of any reports of physical harm. When approached by university officials, Jamal initially denied any hazing was occurring but eventually acknowledged participating in an intake process with Alpha Beta Gamma.

Your Role:

You are the NPHC President and also serve as a student representative on the university's Campus Safety Committee. The Vice President for Student Affairs has called an emergency meeting that includes you, the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, the Assistant Director who supports NPHC chapters, the Director of Residence Life, and a representative from the Office of Multicultural Affairs. You are asked to develop recommendations for a comprehensive response plan that ensures the immediate safety and well-being of Jamal and any other individuals involved in this intake process, determines appropriate accountability measures for Alpha Beta Gamma chapter members involved in organizing or participating in physical hazing, addresses the complex dynamics of legacy, family expectations, and the cultural significance of NPHC membership in the Black community, provide education about the difference between meaningful intake processes and physical hazing while honoring NPHC traditions and history, creates mechanisms for prospective and new members to report concerns without fear of losing their opportunity for membership and develops support systems that recognize the unique challenges NPHC organizations face regarding underground intake activities. Consider how you will balance respect for NPHC traditions, the deep personal and familial significance of Divine Nine membership, and the historical context of these organizations with the absolute necessity of preventing physical harm and ensuring student safety.

Keywords: medium public university, southeastern location, residential campus, diverse student body, NPHC fraternity, Divine Nine, physical hazing, paddling, legacy membership, roommate observation, bystander reporting, mandatory reporting, family expectations, cultural significance, underground intake, historically Black organization