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TO: Chief School Administrators
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FROM: Robert Bumpus, Assistant Commissioner, Field Services
Susan Martz, Assistant Commissioner, Student Services and Career Readiness
Dr. Richard Bozza, Executive Director, NJ Association of School Administrators
Patricia Wright, Executive Director, NJ Principals and Supervisors Association
Steve Timko, Executive Director, NJ State Interscholastic Athletic Association

SUBJECT: Safety and Security Broadcast

For over a decade, October has been designated as the month in which extraordinary focus is devoted to the social-emotional growth of our students. Programs in Character Education, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB), Violence Awareness, Good Sportsmanship, and Culture/Climate are showcased around the state during Week of Respect in early October and School Violence Awareness Week.

Given recent events regarding bullying and hazing in the context of athletics and co-curricular activities, the Department has partnered with NJ Association of School Administrators (NJASA), NJ Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) and the NJ State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) to take a comprehensive look at what schools should be doing to not only prevent bullying and hazing in athletics and co-curricular activities, but to develop strong and supportive positive cultures for these activities.

We encourage all schools to use these recent events as an opportunity to ensure students are supervised at all times during extra-curricular and athletic activities, to identify potential bullying and hazing, and to implement best practices to create positive school cultures.

In order to support you, we are committed to working together now and over time to provide best practices, professional development, and support in implementing the vital policies/procedures that are in place.

We are engaging other public entities like law enforcement, homeland security, and social service agencies to bring a consolidated and comprehensive focus to the issue of student security and social-emotional well being. The Attorney General's Education and Law Enforcement Working Group has been asked to enhance the coordination of law enforcement and education in areas of mutual

responsibilities. Additionally, we are consulting with the Anti-Bullying Task Force concerning the issue of hazing in schools.

While additional guidance will follow, we urge all school districts to immediately take the following initial steps:

- Review district policies, Codes of Conduct for Students and Athletes and Handbooks for Staff and Coaches to ensure they clearly state the positive behavior that is expected and that bullying and hazing will not be tolerated at school or during school-sponsored events.
- Ensure that the above policies and rules are implemented well by providing professional development to appropriate staff.
- Review district policies to ensure that they appropriately address student conduct away from school grounds pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.5.
- Implement best practices using the resources of all professional organizations and the DOE to promote positive school culture and climate.
- Ensure that plans are in place for effective supervision of locker rooms, school facilities and school grounds before, during and after athletic and extra-curricular events.
- Ensure that key school leaders, including the athletic director and school principal engage with coaches and activity advisors to assess current issues related to hazing, to identify and address areas of concern and to ensure that policies and procedures around this issue are implemented with fidelity.
- Review the relevant provisions in the Memorandum of Agreement Between Education and Law Enforcement and ensure all stakeholders fully understand their legal responsibilities to know when and how to report suspected student abuse to law enforcement and child protective services.
- Promote professional development of teachers, coaches and administrators in the areas of student safety and security.
- Continue to work with law enforcement, Department of Children and Families (DCF), and other state agencies to enhance cooperative efforts in supporting student security.
- Strengthen the School Safety/Climate Team(s) with broader representation of the school community including athletics.

Although this list is not exhaustive, it does promote a proactive and sustained approach to student safety. We stand committed to keeping this high on our list of priorities and will in future broadcasts add to the list of resources we will make available to our schools and districts. We begin by offering the following resource from the NJSIAA and the National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS) in the area of hazing:

<http://www.nfhs.org/resources/student-services-inclusion/hazing>

c: Members, State Board of Education
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Executive Directors for Regional Achievement Centers
Executive County School Business Administrators
NJ LEE Group
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