

Richard Montgomery Community,

Please see below for an important message from the office of MCPS Athletics.

November 7, 2018

MCPS Sports Community,

I am writing to share resources and our responses to further support our students and families, following the serious situation in our Damascus High School community. As you may know from the news, five Damascus High School students have been charged with second-degree rape and/or attempted second-degree rape. These charges stem from alleged behavior by members of the junior varsity football team in the school's male locker room after dismissal. These disturbing allegations have elevated emotions and concerns about assault and hazing, behaviors that are in direct conflict with our R.A.I.S.E. core values and our vision of providing a safe and respectful environment across the MCPS athletics department and beyond.

To begin, abuse, bullying, hazing, and harassment, in any form have no place in the MCPS athletics program. Students who engage in such activities are not welcome in our program and, at a minimum, such activities may result in immediate dismissal from the team. Additionally, teams that promote or engage in such activities will be subject to team sanctions, including forfeiture of contest(s). In short, donning the uniform of one of our schools and representing MCPS in the realm of competition is a cherished privilege. Students and teams who engage in these harmful and despicable behaviors will not represent their schools or our program as a whole.

Moving forward, I want you to know that we are fully committed to supporting all stakeholders in our program: our athletic directors, coaches, parents/guardians, communities and the heart of our program, our student-athletes. We want to ensure that everyone is educated on the harmful impact and characteristics of abuse, bullying, hazing, and harassment, and make sure that incidents of these behaviors are reported immediately. Attached to this letter are some resources for teams and coaches, as well as some tips for parents. Additional information and resources are available on our MCPS athletics website.

In response to this situation, I have met with athletic directors and communicated a plan for enhanced education and engagement with our students and coaches to ensure that we are promoting a positive environment free of hazing, bullying, harassment, and abuse. This will be addressed with coaches at preseason meetings and reinforced throughout each season. Additionally, every coach across the program will be further emphasizing the promotion of a positive culture and the harmful effects and consequences of hazing, bullying, harassment, and abuse with their respective teams at the beginning of each season. Included in this enhanced education is information for identifying and reporting such instances if they occur. More information raising awareness regarding hazing, bullying, and harassment is available in this video, which was e-mailed to all MCPS high school students and distributed on social media.

In the coming months, we will conduct an analysis of our operations through a critical lens to ensure that we are maximizing the experiences of our student-athletes consistent with our vision, mission, and R.A.I.S.E. core values. We will work collaboratively with all stakeholders in our program to identify strategies and procedures to further promote a positive environment around our athletics program, schools, and communities. Thank you for your continued support and prayers for the Damascus High School community during this difficult time.

Attached are resources for further information.

[Parent Tip Sheet Positive Culture – Hazing](#)

[Slides.rtm.11.7.2018](#)

[What Parents Need to Know – extracted from HS Resource Guide for Hazing ...](#)

[What Students Need to Know – extracted from HS Resource Guide for Hazing...](#)

Together, We RAISE MCPS Athletics,

Jeffrey K. Sullivan, CMAA  
Director, Systemwide Athletics  
Montgomery County Public Schools