

## CHAPTER STANDARDS BOARDS

### OVERVIEW

Chapter Standards Boards (also referred to as internal standards boards, j-boards, and house committees) serve as the judicial body for a fraternity. A well-functioning chapter standards board hears violations of a fraternity's by-laws and standards of conduct and will ultimately adjudicate such violations by assigning sanctions to those individual members who were responsible for such actions.

Chapter Standards Boards (CSB) function as part of the internal operations of a fraternity and focus on holding individual members accountable when they act in a fashion that is not consistent with that of the fraternity. Further, CSB's are beneficial in addressing issues when a "chapter incident" was caused by a select few members. In so doing, the fraternity is able to respond to and remedy an issue by dealing directly with those who were responsible.

### BENEFITS

Chapter Standards Boards promote self-governance, facilitate increased education among fraternity members, deters future and reoccurring problems, and allows chapter officers to focus on responsibilities and duties that are specific to their position. Further, when a chapter sanctions individual members, the sanction is generally more effective as it is being levied by a body that is in-touch with the primary issue(s) at hand.. Finally, if the IFC or inter/national organization is investigating and responding to an incident, the action and response of a CSB positions the chapter to face less harsh consequences/sanctions as it allows the chapter to demonstrate that the issue has been addressed and those responsible have been held accountable.

### ESTABLISHING A CHAPTER STANDARDS BOARD

- **Contact inter/national organization.** Nearly all inter/national organizations have a mechanism for holding members accountable to chapter standards. In many cases, the inter/national organization has templates and models that can be adapted to the local chapter. The inter/national organization will likely be able to provide information on processes, officer responsibilities in the process, and possible sanctions.
- **Determine the scope and authority of the CSB.** From the onset, it is critical to determine what issues and concerns will be referred to the CSB. Additionally, it is important to consider what level of authority the board will have. For example, will the board have the power to suspend a member? To restrict social privileges? To levy fines?
- **Determine/revise/update/ the chapter's by-laws and standards of conduct.** A committee of chapter representatives can update this information and will be important to revisit these policies and expectations on an annual basis to ensure that they accurately reflect the chapter.
- **Develop a Chapter Standards Board committee.** Inter/national organizations often mandate that specific officers chair and/or serve on the standards committee. In other instances, it may be necessary to appoint/elect a committee that will serve on the CSB. It is recommended that the committee comprise 5 -7 active undergraduates who represent different new member ("pledge") classes as well as different cliques in the chapter. If the chapter has a local and committed alumnus advisor, it is encouraged that the advisor play a role in the CSB process.

- **Outline the Chapter Standards Board process.** This will likely be a lengthy process as the chapter will need to outline the CSB process from start to finish. Specific items to consider include:
  - What process will be used in submitting complaints against members?
  - Who can submit complaints?
  - How will allegations be investigated?
  - How will all information be documented?
  - How will evidence be submitted?
  - How will the trial/hearing flow?
  - What standard will be used for determining guilt/responsibility? (preponderance of evidence vs. beyond a reasonable doubt?)
  - What role with the committee chair play?
  - Can an appeal be filed? If so, what is the process?
  - How will sanctions be decided?

*Note: The IFC Judiciary Committee, the University Judiciary Committee, and the Honor Committee have pre-determined processes for hearing alleged violations. All processes are available for review and may provide a foundation for developing the Chapter Standards Board process.*

- **Develop Possible Sanctions.** Prior to holding any trial/hearing, it is critical that the chapter discuss and brainstorm a list of possible sanctions for violations. In order to facilitate this process, it is recommended that the chapter president or CSB chair lead the chapter in a discussion of possible violations and ask the chapter for recommended sanctions. In so doing, the chapter should brainstorm possible sanctions the whole expanse of violations. For example, the chapter should list possible sanctions for minor incidents (skipping a chapter meeting), mid-level incidents (damage to fraternity property, and major incidents (driving under the influence, physical abuse). Through the process, all chapter members should be engaged; and, whenever possible, “problem” members should be asked for their suggestions as this will promote increase buy-in and legitimacy of the CSB process.
- **Train CSB Members.** Once a process and possible sanctions have been developed, it is important to train the Chapter Standards Board to ensure success and legitimacy. Specific items to address with CSB should include the role of confidentiality, expectations of members, and how to actively listen and ask questions.

The CSB should also be advised as to how to craft sanctions. The following is a list of items to consider/ask during the sanctioning process:

- How did the action affect the chapter? The fraternity/sorority community? The University?
- How were individuals impacted?
- Was the action the result of a “lack of knowledge” or did the responsible party knowingly violate the policy?
- How will the sanction impact the responsible party? What will he learn?
- What message does the sanction send to the chapter? How will it deter future behavior?
- Is the sanction manageable, feasible, and realistic?
- Is the sanction consistent?
- Does the sanction(s) reflect the severity of the issue at hand?
- What University/inter/national organization resources can be enlisted?

## CHAPTER STANDARDS BOARDS: POSSIBLE SANCTIONS

The following is a list of possible sanctions that standards boards can issue through the CSB process. The list is not meant to be exhaustive and it is recommended that the chapter develop a list of additional sanctions to complement the information below. Further, the chapter standards board should be given the authority to levy other sanctions that may more readily address a specific incident.

### POSSIBLE SANCTIONS

- Loss of vote at chapter meetings, recruitment events, etc.
- Loss of room pick privileges.
- Formal letter of apology to affected party.
- Attending an appropriate workshop or educational seminar offered by the University.
- Present an appropriate workshop or educational seminar to the chapter.
- Paying for damages.
- Loss of social privileges.
- Loss of intramural participation.
- Removal from office or position.
- Loss of privilege to live in the chapter house.
- Loss of privilege to be a Big Brother.
- Loss of privilege to run for a position in chapter elections.
- Required to seek professional help.
- Required to organize an educational program.
- Required to set up a service event for the chapter.
- Required to speak to the pledge class about the faults of the action.

**UNIVERSITY RESOURCES.** Whenever possible, it is recommended that a chapter standards board enlist University resources and personnel in developing and delivering sanctions. The University has various resources that can assist a chapter in addressing issues such as alcohol, drugs, and mental health. In these cases, these resources may more effectively deliver information, services and resources to chapters, such efforts stand to better supplement educational programs that individual members may be sanctioned to develop.

The following list provides University resources that CSB's can enlist in developing individual sanctions:

- **CHOICES.** The Choices alcohol education program is an evidence-based online program using the "*Under the Influence*" curriculum developed by 3rd Millennium Classrooms. The program consists of seven lessons that can be completed in approximately three hours. This non-judgmental program provides personal feedback and emphasizes personal responsibility to create an engaging learning experience.

The program is free and can be used as a sanction in response to an issue involving alcohol misuse, dangerous drinking, or risk related concerns.

To register: <http://www.virginia.edu/case/education/choices.html>. The referring party will also need to send an email to Debra Reed ([dsr3g@virginia.edu](mailto:dsr3g@virginia.edu)) at the Center for Alcohol and Substance Education (CASE) to inform what individual has been referred to the program.

- **Marijuana 101.** The program consists of six lessons that can be completed in approximately three hours and is an online program.

The program is free and can be used as a sanction in response to an issue involving marijuana.

To register: <http://www.virginia.edu/case/education/choices.html>. The referring party will also need to send an email to Debra Reed ([dsr3g@virginia.edu](mailto:dsr3g@virginia.edu)) at the Center for Alcohol and Substance Education (CASE) to inform what individual has been referred to the program.

- **Community Service.** There are several agencies and departments at the University that will accept student volunteers to perform community service.
  - The Center for Alcohol and Substance Education (CASE) will often accept community service volunteers; a sanction of community service in CASE would be appropriate for an individual(s) who has been involved in an incident involving alcohol, drugs, or risk management violations. To arrange for this service, the sanctioned student will need to contact Debra Reed ([dsr3g@virginia.edu](mailto:dsr3g@virginia.edu)) to arrange for the completion of hours.

---

The following resources were consulted in developing the information outlined above:

**Beta Theta Pi:** Officer Manual/Kai Committee. Available at: [http://www.betathetapi.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=124&Itemid=162](http://www.betathetapi.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=124&Itemid=162)

**Theta Chi:** Chapter Operation Manual/Standard Committee. Available at: [http://www.thetachi.org/REPOSITORY/UNMANAGED\\_CONTENT/COMs/COM-Standards.pdf](http://www.thetachi.org/REPOSITORY/UNMANAGED_CONTENT/COMs/COM-Standards.pdf)