



Parents of Timothy Piazza settle with Penn State, sue fraternity members

By Lauren del Valle

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(CNN)The parents of a Penn State University student who died in a hazing ritual have settled with the university and sued 28 members of the fraternity they say contributed to their son's death.

Jim and Evelyn Piazza settled with Penn State last week for an undisclosed amount of money and safety reforms almost two years after the death of their son, Timothy.

The agreement also features strong language stipulating the university's commitment to permanently barring Beta Theta Pi from existing at Penn State.

Wrongful death lawsuit

The civil lawsuit filed Thursday in federal court names 28 former Penn State University Beta Theta Pi fraternity members, alleging negligence, conspiracy and battery assault. There are three criminal cases in connection with the incident that remain in various stages of the legal process.



Jim and Evelyn Piazza, parents of Timothy Piazza, who died after hazing at Penn State University, speak out.

The suit also names as a defendant St. Moritz Security Services, the company that provided security monitors at Greek Life social events, according to the civil complaint. The company declined to comment to CNN.

The Beta Theta Pi fraternity's national organization settled with the Piazza family for an undisclosed amount of money last September.

"The early findings of that investigation indicated that the behavior of several undergraduate members was in direct contradiction of the International Fraternity's expectations and risk management policies, as well as the International Fraternity's reputation and commitment to character development," a previous statement made by the organization stated.

The settlement provided that the Piazza family could move forward with claims against other parties, including the individuals they say are connected to their son's death.

"The civil suit focuses on holding accountable the individuals who planned and participated in the reckless hazing activities which caused Tim's death," Piazza family lawyer **Tom Kline** said in a statement to CNN. "We expect this federal lawsuit to result in a trial to determine the shared responsibility of all those who contributed to the needless and senseless tragedy. We look to the civil justice system to obtain a full measure of accountability."

Most serious charges dismissed

A Pennsylvania judge dismissed all charges of involuntary manslaughter and reckless endangerment, the most serious offenses, against fraternity members connected to Piazza's death in December 2018.

This wasn't the first time these charges have been thrown out. Prosecutors had refiled the more severe homicide-related charges after losing in court.

Two fraternity members pleaded guilty to hazing and unlawful acts involving alcohol.

Settlement with the school

The university agreement outlines safety reforms that encourage Greek organizations to participate in precautionary and educational measures, though the agreement stops short of mandating those reforms.

Last week, the university and the Piazzas announced the Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research and Reform. The university also pledged \$2 million and help raising money to help it become a national Greek life research center, according to a university statement.

"Universities have been operating in a void and missing critical information, such as a consistent and cumulative nationwide look at Greek life on our campuses," Penn State President Eric Barron said in a statement about the center.

The Piazzas "acknowledge and endorse the important strides made at PSU, especially the significant work of President Eric Barron, in bringing about meaningful and permanent changes in Greek life to Penn State and college campuses around the country," **Tom Kline** said in a statement.

The settlement with Penn State was a "direct outgrowth of the determined dedication by Jim and Evelyn Piazza to the cause of preventing hazing injury and death in Greek life," Kline said.

CNN's Sara Ganim and Darran Simon contributed to this report.