



The U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS) provides services to communities to respond to community tension and allegations of bias and hate incidents.

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# Preventing and Responding to Bias and Hate Incidents in K-12 Educational Settings:

## A Toolkit for School Communities and Leaders

Students, parents, and school administrators deserve safe and inclusive environments that are free of harassment and discrimination. Well-designed and facilitated opportunities for groups to dialogue together can enable divided communities to address differences, through respectful sharing of perspectives that moves towards solutions by focusing on the common good.

### Best practices for especially difficult conversations ▼

- ▶ Redesign meeting formats to help keep difficult conversations productive and respectful, such as smaller meetings or breakout sessions.
- ▶ Provide multiple opportunities for community members to dialogue together, recognizing that everyone may not be comfortable with the same meeting format or available at the same time.
- ▶ Create a meeting structure that is conducive to productive dialogue where all perspectives can be shared by using ground rules that emphasize civil and respectful discourse, designating positions with clear roles (facilitator, timekeeper, etc.), and announcing a specific meeting purpose that sets participants' expectations about the meeting.
- ▶ Keep meetings on track with experienced facilitators who can acknowledge and defuse the emotion behind statements, reframe issues to focus on concerns and interests, and assess the participants' readiness to reach a solution.
- ▶ Use co-facilitators so that if one needs to address the needs of one or a small group of participants, the other can keep the meeting moving forward.
- ▶ Recognize that groups may not be ready to collaborate on solutions if they don't feel that they have been heard.
- ▶ After community members have had sufficient opportunities to share their perspectives, create a process for community groups to collaborate on solutions.
- ▶ Ask CRS for meeting design or facilitation support.
- ▶ Request CRS's Facilitating Meetings Around Community Conflict in-person or virtual training.

### Host a public solidarity event against hate and bias. ▼

- ▶ Where appropriate and safe, public events and virtual convening can be used to raise awareness on bias and hate impacting communities.
- ▶ Share existing resources relevant to bias and hate, such as local human relations commissions, school programs, social services support, and programs supported by local community stakeholders.
- ▶ Create a space for survivors, supporters, and allies to express their concerns related to bias and hate, such as a community forum, [facilitated dialogue](#), listening session, or email tip box.
- ▶ Solidarity events can show community members they are not alone. Consider inviting other stakeholders such as faith leaders, community leaders, and law enforcement.

### Be prepared for possible unrest, bias incidents, and hate crimes. ▼

- ▶ Identify and prepare for events where there may be an increased potential for hate or bias incidents.
- ▶ [Educate](#) community members on reporting procedures, hate crime laws, and best practices for protecting [places of worship](#).
- ▶ Alert local law enforcement about threats and other potentially criminal activity. Meet with law enforcement to learn about what and how to report.
- ▶ Coordinate plans for possible emergency situations such as targeted violence, hate crimes, and demonstrations with the potential for violence.
- ▶ Be aware of community events, observances, and holidays that may influence patterns of gathering and travel.
- ▶ Review materials and communications for [language accessibility and translation needs](#).
- ▶ Conduct a run through of your response plan to identify missing links and areas of improvement.
- ▶ Make law enforcement and community leaders aware of significant sites that may be targeted, including neighborhoods, workplaces, places of worship, consulates, embassies, cemeteries, historical monuments, and other congregate settings.

### Take steps to mitigate the toll that bias and hate can have on the mental and physical well-being of impacted groups. ▼

- ▶ Have your working group engage with experts to ensure a common understanding of when and how mental health resources may be used.
- ▶ Some reported bias- or hate-related incidents have involved suspects with mental health issues. The working group can familiarize itself with local law enforcement processes for working with suspects with mental health issues.
- ▶ Provide [mental health resources](#) to survivors and members of communities experiencing hate and bias.
- ▶ Ensure first and second responders have access to adequate mental health and trauma support.
- ▶ Ensure survivor and witness resources are culturally appropriate.

### Equip schools to respond to bias and hate incidents. ▼

- ▶ Encourage your school to have a cyberbullying and harassment policy.
- ▶ Train school officials on bias and hate incident reporting and investigation best practices.
- ▶ Reach out to impacted students.

CRS serves as “America’s Peacemaker” for communities in conflict by mediating disputes and enhancing community capacity to independently prevent and resolve future conflicts. Under Title X of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, CRS responds to community conflicts arising from differences of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. CRS does not have investigative or prosecutorial authority. Rather, CRS impartially works with communities in conflict to help rebuild relationships, facilitate mutual understanding, and encourage the development of local solutions. CRS’s conciliators work directly with state and local officials, community-based organizations, community and civil rights advocates, faith-based groups, and law enforcement on a voluntary basis. CRS’s facilitated dialogue, consultation, training, and mediation are free and confidential.

### Resources ▼

[Facilitator Training, “Facilitating Meetings Around Community Conflict”](https://www.justice.gov/file/1376611/download)

<https://www.justice.gov/file/1376611/download>

[CRS services for school communities](https://www.justice.gov/crs/our-stakeholders/educational-organizations)

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### Additional U.S. Department of Justice resources ▼

[Hate Crime Threat Guide](#)

Federal Bureau of Investigation

[Hate Crime Reporting – Working to Close the Gap](#)

Community Oriented Policing Services

[Improving the Identification and Reporting of Hate Crimes](#)

Community Oriented Policing Services

[Improving the Identification, Investigation, and Reporting of Hate Crimes: A Summary Report of the Law Enforcement Roundtable](#)

Community Oriented Policing Services

[Stop Hate: Action Steps for Local Communities](#)

Community Oriented Policing Services

[Helping Communities Prevent and Respond to Hate Crimes](#)

Community Relations Service

[Stop Hate & Build Inclusion: Resources for Law Enforcement and Community Partners](#)

Community Oriented Policing Services

### For emergencies dial 9-1-1 to get immediate help. ▼

If you believe you are the victim of a hate crime or believe you witnessed a hate crime:

**Step 1:** Report the crime to your local police.

**Step 2:** Quickly follow up this report with a tip to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) by calling 1-800-CALL-FBI or submitting the information at [tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov). You may remain anonymous.

### Find us, connect with us ▼

[www.justice.gov/crs](https://www.justice.gov/crs)

[www.justice.gov/hatecrimes](https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes)