

Action Agenda  
for Community Organizations  
and Law Enforcement to  
**Enhance the Response  
to Hate Crimes**

# ABOUT THE ACTION AGENDA

In response to hate crimes and hate incidents, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the International Association of Chiefs of Police partnered to launch the Enhancing the Response to Hate Crimes Advisory Committee, which convened leaders in law enforcement, civil rights, and academia for a series of discussions examining promising practices for response to hate crimes. As the discussions progressed, the committee members identified five critical issues that are imperative to enhancing hate crimes response practices, as well as an action agenda for community organizations and law enforcement to address each critical issue.

The action agenda has three categories of action items—actions that community leaders, civil rights organizations, and law enforcement can take, together, to address these critical issues; actions that community

and civil rights organizations can take to proactively engage law enforcement and other stakeholders in combating hate; and actions that law enforcement can take to effectively engage with vulnerable communities, including actions before, during, and after a crisis event.

The goal of these action items is to help break down barriers and strengthen trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve to enhance the prevention, reporting, investigation, and successful prosecution of hate crimes. Once implemented, these action items will enhance the ability of law enforcement, civil rights organizations, and community organizations to more effectively address hate and bias-motivated crimes in their communities and to help ensure the safety of all individuals threatened by hate.

## The Five Critical Issues



**Increasing Community–Law Enforcement Collaboration to Address Hate Crimes, Including Partnerships with Civil Rights and Community Organizations**



**Enhancing Training and Education About Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement, Prosecutors, and Community Members**



**Strengthening Data Collection, Reporting, and Analysis**



**Improving Hate Incident and Crime Management Policies and Responses for Law Enforcement**



**Role of Prosecutors: Early and Ongoing Communication with Law Enforcement, Proactive Engagement with Community, Development of Hate Crimes Expertise**



## Increasing Community–Law Enforcement Collaboration to Address Hate Crimes, Including Partnerships with Civil Rights and Community Organizations

### Shared Action Items

- Proactively bring law enforcement officials, community leaders, and prosecutors together to discuss community response to hate crimes and hate incidents before a crisis occurs. For example, agencies and organizations can do the following:
  - Create a hate crimes task force that meets regularly.
  - Incorporate a discussion of hate crimes into existing community meetings or engagements.
  - Co-host outreach events that provide a platform for community members to ask questions or address concerns.
- Create a public awareness campaign that demonstrates a community-wide commitment to eliminating hate and intolerance and educates the public on legal protections against hate crimes. Consider promoting the campaign via social media with a concise hashtag, such as **#strongerthanhate**.
- Engage youth to drive change and community understanding around hate. Consider partnering with universities in the community to learn from their unique experiences in developing solutions to hate crime.<sup>1</sup>
- Ensure officers have a shared understanding of the experiences of communities targeted by hate and their engagement with law enforcement. This knowledge base can be informed by community surveys, community meetings, and other feedback mechanisms.

### Community and Civil Rights Organization Action Items

- Serve as a bridge to law enforcement. Proactively reach out to the local law enforcement agency to discuss hate and bias concerns affecting the community. For example, organizations can do the following:
  - Create a list of community-based organizations with points of contact that are available and open to assisting local law enforcement with victims' needs and outreach efforts.
  - Invite local law enforcement to community functions to provide informal opportunities for law enforcement to engage with community members.
- Highlight the importance of hate crimes response and reporting to local government and law enforcement officials and speak publicly about how an increase in hate crimes numbers can demonstrate a growing trust between police and the community.
- Each community should gauge its comfort level with law enforcement. Encourage agencies to offer anonymous online surveys to help evaluate community-police relationships.

<sup>1</sup> See also the Anti-Defamation League's No Place for Hate initiative <https://www.adl.org/who-we-are/our-organization/signature-programs/no-place-for-hate>; Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and Not In Our Town Stop Hate Action Kits for Schools and Campuses, <https://www.niot.org/stop-hate-action-kits>.

## Law Enforcement Action Items

- Use the bully pulpit to speak out against hate and intolerance, even when the specifics of an investigation cannot be discussed. Publicly acknowledge the importance of correctly categorizing hate crimes and charging offenders due to the devastating impact on the entire community.
- Pursue and prioritize partnerships with a comprehensive group of community groups, local leaders, advocacy organizations, community health centers, educators, and other stakeholders.
- Invite community leaders to serve on a community advisory board or to other agency-sponsored events, for both formal and informal opportunities to engage with specific populations. Have them report regularly to the agency liaison.
- Reach out to and engage in community policing with new residents, especially if the community is undergoing a rapid change in population demographics. For example, partner with local leaders in the Latinx, transgender, Muslim, or other communities to drive collaboration.
- Prioritize participation in community functions hosted by local organizations and leaders, especially during religious holidays or cultural celebrations. These events may provide informal opportunities for law enforcement to engage with community members.
- Develop and adopt principles for engaging the community that are accessible to all members of the agency and to the community. Use principles developed by other police leaders as a starting point.<sup>2</sup>



## Enhancing Training and Education About Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement, Prosecutors, and Community Members

### Shared Action Items

- **Collaborate to develop and provide insight for law enforcement training on recognizing and classifying hate crimes, improving cultural competency, and avoiding bias and discriminatory stereotypes. Continue these efforts on an annual basis so training does not become “out of touch” as the community progresses.**

### Community and Civil Rights Organization Action Items

- Offer training and educational opportunities to help police and other community leaders understand what hate looks like in marginalized communities and others targeted for hate.
- Recommend training providers, ensuring they have enough expertise and experience to offer credible training that does not promote stereotypes.

<sup>2</sup> See the Oak Creek Police Department's nine guiding principles for engaging the community, detailed in "Oak Creek: Leading a Community in the Aftermath of a Tragedy," *Police Chief* 80 (October 2013): 98-106.

## Law Enforcement Action Items

- Prioritize training on hate crimes in the academy, and continually train experienced officers throughout their career. Provide officers with related, ongoing training on cultural competency, professionalism, and implicit bias training. Evaluate training to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.
- Actively engage with community organizations to identify trusted and credible leaders from your community that can serve as bridges between targeted communities and law enforcement. Leverage these partnerships to advise training curricula.
- Work with community organizations to stay abreast of changing demographics, adjusting and updating training accordingly.
- Inform local and state government officials about the importance of effective hate crimes response. This can help an agency obtain and direct more resources as well as increase understanding among decision makers.



## Strengthening Data Collection, Reporting, and Analysis

### Shared Action Items

- **Work together to help build better community-police relations, foster trust, and encourage hate incident reporting to law enforcement.**
- **Communicate with local government representatives to emphasize the importance of adequately funding and supporting local law enforcement agencies in the collection and reporting of hate crime data.**
- Identify community leaders that can serve as a liaison between law enforcement and the community for concerns regarding data collection and reporting hate crimes. Ensure that these representatives can adequately explain the importance of hate incident data collection and reporting hate crimes.
- Publicly support agencies that improve hate incident and hate crime reporting, especially if local officials are concerned that a reported increase in these incidents would be misinterpreted and reflect poorly on the community. For example,

### Community and Civil Rights Organization Action Items

- Encourage community members to report hate crimes and hate incidents to law enforcement agencies where they feel comfortable reporting.
- Emphasize that a reported increase in hate crime may demonstrate that the city is a safe one in which community members trust law enforcement enough to report hate crimes and further, that the city prioritizes combating hate.

### Law Enforcement Action Items

- Track and report both hate incidents and hate crimes and make the data available to the public. Ensure your reporting forms make it easy to mark an incident or crime as a suspected hate incident or hate crime.
- Recognize the barriers that some communities confront in reporting hate crimes, including concerns around immigration status. Make it easy and safe for all victims to report hate crimes. Provide reporting options in multiple languages and methods to ensure your reporting mechanisms are accessible.
- Survey your community to measure the climate of hate and to effectively evaluate the agency-community relationship.
- Review your own reporting history and identify possible reporting barriers to national crime data collection systems.
- Transition to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) for reporting of all crimes. NIBRS allows researchers to identify bias if an incident wasn't originally investigated as a biased motivated crime.
- Designate an in-house analyst to examine trends in hate incidents.
- Include cultural competency and proactive community engagement activities in performance evaluations for law enforcement officers.



## Improving Hate Incident and Crime Management Policies and Responses for Law Enforcement

### Shared Action Items

- **All stakeholders should seek a better understanding of the existing policies and practices to address hate crime.**
- **Reach out to local legislators to advocate for more inclusive hate crime policies and legislation.**

### Community and Civil Rights Organizations Action Items

- Host meetings with community members to collect feedback on responses to hate incidents and hate crimes and to better understand what hate looks like in the community. This includes examining what has worked and not worked with respect to responses by law enforcement and social service providers.
- Participate in community advisory boards to help progress law enforcement's policies and procedures regarding hate crimes.

- Proactively reach out to agencies to offer a community perspective and advise on their response efforts in the aftermath of an incident.

### Law Enforcement Action Items

- Quickly recognize and identify bias indicators where present to accurately identify hate crimes. For example, after gathering necessary evidence, paint over hate symbols to send a powerful message to the community that there is no place for hate in the town.
- In the immediate aftermath of an alleged hate crime, ensure that comments from the department to the media or public do not rule out bias motivation. Emphasize more generally that hate and discrimination have no place in the community.

- Provide access to a readily accessible or easy-to-use pull-out checklist when planning for a demonstration or responding to a call to determine if it is bias-motivated.<sup>3</sup>
- Publish adopted policies and procedures online and identify them in community engagements to increase transparency and accountability.
- If resources allow, establish and dedicate a unit of officers skilled in hate crime response specifically for responding to these types of crimes.
- Develop policies modeled after the Oak Creek Police Department's nine guiding principles for engaging the community, which include the following:
  - Maintain a strong, visible leadership role in the aftermath of a hate crime or any public safety crisis and continue this role with the public, the media, and the survivors and the victims' families.
  - Be transparent and share as much information about an incident as the department can without jeopardizing an investigation.
  - Thoroughly investigate and accurately report every incident that might be a hate crime.
- Focus on diversity and cultural competency in recruiting and retention. Local law enforcement agencies should strive to reflect the population demographic of their community.
- Address the bias and discrimination that may exist in the department.
- Encourage the community to report hate incidents as well as hate crimes, recognizing that identifying where hate incidents occur may help to direct resources to address and prevent hate crimes.



## Role of Prosecutors: Early and Ongoing Communication with Law Enforcement, Proactive Engagement with Community, Development of Hate Crimes Expertise

### Shared Action Item

- **Establish hate crimes task forces that meet on a regular basis or incorporate hate crimes into existing community meetings or engagements, to bring together law enforcement leaders, prosecutors, and community leaders before a crisis occurs. Collaborative efforts can help build relationships for more effective identification of hate incidents and crimes, better training, and improved preparation of prosecution cases.**

### Community and Civil Rights Organizations Action Items

- Invite prosecutors to community outreach engagements.

- Partner with local prosecutorial offices to host “know your rights” trainings on hate crimes and hate incidents for community members. Include information about the legal elements of hate crimes and challenges in prosecuting hate crimes.

### Law Enforcement Action Items

- Prosecutors and law enforcement should engage in joint training on hate crimes and community engagements.
- Engage prosecutors early during the investigation of hate crimes cases.
- Consider recommending that a prosecutor's office delegate one attorney to prosecute hate crimes in the community.

<sup>3</sup> See also IACP, *Responding to Hate Crimes*, [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/IACP-Hate\\_Crimes\\_Brochure.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/IACP-Hate_Crimes_Brochure.pdf).



**44 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 200  
Alexandria, VA 22314**

**1.800.THE IACP**

**[theIACP.org](http://theIACP.org)**



**LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR  
CIVIL RIGHTS  
U N D E R L A W**

**1500 K Street NW, 9th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005**

**202.662.8600**

**[lawyerscommittee.org](http://lawyerscommittee.org)**