



LOCAL AND REGIONAL  
**GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON  
RACE & EQUITY**



## **Action Guide**

### **Addressing and Preventing Hate Crimes or Violence**

**8/21/17**

As the number of hate crimes across the country continues to increase, the role of local government has never been more important. How a jurisdiction responds to this type of violence is critical in charting a course forward for the entire community. Fear, isolation, and fragmentation often permeate communities in the aftermath of these tragedies, highlighting the need for an immediate and multi-pronged approach.

Below are concrete actions that local jurisdictions can take to respond to hate crimes or violence. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but offers a starting point for local government to think strategically about how to use these incidents to build long-term community strength and resilience.

#### **First and foremost:**

##### **Be Proactive (Create the Infrastructure to Respond BEFORE You're in Crisis):**

- Form a bias incident team that tracks all incidents of bias—broader than just those categorized as hate crimes—and lays out a plan for how to respond to a hate crime or a biased incident.
- Craft a communications plan that clearly articulates who's responsible for what and what your top-level messages are if hate violence occurs in your area. Identify the arguments of the opposition—those looking to instill fear and divide the community—and reframe the narrative toward your vision of a multi-racial, inclusive democracy.
- Work with elected officials and the community to identify what rules, regulations, and laws already exist within city structures and where there are places for improvement.
- Meet with community members and frontline impacted community members on a regular and ongoing basis so that law enforcement can identify different forms of hate, and community members understand local government infrastructure and how to reach out if they need support.
- Attend meetings hosted by community groups to listen and get a better sense of what's happening on the ground and how people are experiencing our current political moment.
- Monitor and report on the activity of white supremacist hate groups; including infiltration into local government:
  - Monitor and develop strategies to combat white supremacist organizations, and
  - Use Political Research Associates as a resource, subscribe to the Public Eye magazine, and access their online resources, research, and assessments of white supremacist paramilitary groups active across the country.
- Stay focused on long-term, structural change that reduces racial disparities and makes local government more equitable.

**In addition, we need:**

**1) Bold Leadership**

- Timing is critical; respond quickly and publicly to affirm your jurisdiction's values of equity, inclusion, and justice.
- Hate crimes are not isolated acts of violence, as such, they should be contextualized within broader patterns of institutional and structural racism:
  - Name your local region's history as it relates to violence against people of color and other marginalized groups. Hate violence doesn't occur in a vacuum, it happens in communities where people feel that it's accepted. Examine the pre-existing racial inequalities and conditions that allowed this to occur and speak to their root causes.
  - Intentionally center the role that racism and bias plays in these acts.
  - Place the incident within our broader political climate, which has been fueled by fear, hatred, and division.
- Accelerate the push for local government to address institutional racism, structural racism, and implicit bias.
- Convene local elected officials and leaders to hear directly from the community and those most impacted.

**2) Support the Community**

- Partner with trusted leaders and community-based organizations to host listening sessions. Identify community needs, and implement action items emerge from the sessions.
- Direct resources toward community groups working on the ground, with an emphasis on funding:
  - Multi-racial organizing,
  - Multi-sector approaches to leveraging systems change, and
  - Long-term change efforts that focus on root causes.
- Work with local philanthropy to leverage additional resources and dollars to community efforts.
- Launch an inclusive public campaign targeted at tackling hate crimes, hate violence, racial inequity, and helping people feel safe in public spaces.
- Come up with structures that allow and facilitate individual resident action; allowing people to directly participate and tangibly make a difference.
- Partner with other sectors—business, education, nonprofit, etc—to identify opportunities to collaborate and build community resilience.
- Launch a general education project focused on examining the role that whiteness played in the incident. Identify and use opportunities to engage white people in dialogue and action for racial justice.

**3) Work with Local Law Enforcement**

- Identify racial equity advocates in law enforcement to co-develop strategies that offer increased support for the community without re-traumatizing people.

- Engage police officers in dialogue and discussion with the community about how to return to a sense of safety and ownership of local space:
  - Encourage police officers to own a process that's much broader than simply documenting the incident and catching the person responsible, and
  - The community is going to interpret how the police reacts to these incidents through the lens of their past experience with law enforcement; building strong relationships between police and community can help mitigate potential conflict.
- Identify the individual or team responsible for tracking and reporting hate crimes and partner with them to offer support and identify opportunities for strengthening their efforts.
- Track and monitor how police departments treat white protesters versus people of color protesters. Create mechanisms to ensure fair and equal treatment.
- Train local law enforcement on how to identify organized racist groups and react to them appropriately:
  - White supremacist acts of violence should be viewed as political in nature, and therefore potentially premeditated and organized, not simply as random expressions of hate or as symptoms of mental illness, and
  - As acts of political violence, hate incidents should be viewed as a challenge to law enforcement and the state.
- Brief police on community-based resources, including advocacy organizations, that can help victims.
- Leverage community courts/restorative justice options instead of punitive options. Create a separate education based strategy to respond to hate violence committed by youth.

#### **4) Increase Reporting of Hate Crimes and Violence**

- Disaggregate data to ensure that you're getting a complete picture of the impact of hate violence locally. Use the disaggregated data to target strategies and resources accordingly.
- Partner with (and resource) trusted community-based groups to track hate violence and increase the likelihood of reporting.
- Broaden the data captured by local government to include incidents of bias and discrimination that don't fit within legal requirements of a hate crime. This will strengthen your jurisdiction's understanding of the numerous ways in which people of color are being targeted.

#### **5) Support Your Employees**

- Offer bystander and de-escalation training with a racial equity lens so that your employees feel equipped to interrupt hate in public places.
- Hold space, including sending emails inviting dialogue, convening staff meetings, invite fellow employees to attend anti-hate gatherings in response to an incident, for your employees to process and have conversations about the tragedy and how it impacts them.
- Build skills of employees to eliminate institutional and structural racism as a part of their jobs. Make clear that public employees understand their roles in advancing racial equity.
- Collaborate with other local cities and counties to create a coordinated regional response.