

COMBATTING HATE IN MASSACHUSETTS

The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office is committed to addressing hate incidents whenever and wherever they occur. Along with the impact on individual victims, hate incidents threaten the safety, well-being, and freedom of entire communities. Hate will not be tolerated.



Hate crime or hate incident?

Certain criminal conduct is a hate crime when the perpetrator is motivated by bias or prejudice against another person's race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. Hate incidents are acts of bias that are not crimes.

What laws protect you?

The Massachusetts Civil Rights Act

The Massachusetts Civil Rights Act protects all Massachusetts residents and visitors to Massachusetts against hate-based threats or attacks that interfere with their legally protected rights. This can include, for example:

- Harassment by neighbors or landlords
- Interference with protected activities, such as accessing reproductive health facilities or casting a vote
- Threats or violence in public spaces

Hate Crimes Law

It is a crime to commit assault, battery, or damage someone's property with the intent to intimidate that person because of their identity. A perpetrator can also be prosecuted if they interfere by force or threat of force with a protected right. Hateful conduct can still be a hate crime even if the perpetrator was mistaken in believing the victim was a member of a particular group or if bias was not the only motivating factor for the conduct.

Anti-Discrimination Laws

The Attorney General's Office enforces Massachusetts law which prohibits discrimination in housing, the workplace, schools, and public spaces. A person's rights may have been violated if:

- A landlord fails to protect a tenant from hate-based harassment by a neighbor
- An employer fails to take action to address a hostile work environment caused by hate or bias in the workplace
- A school fails to take action when students are bullied or harassed based on a protected characteristic
- A business fails to protect its customers from hateful conduct by its employees

Other Consequences

Sometimes, hate-based incidents and speech do not violate the law, including when they are protected by the First Amendment. However, there may be other consequences in those cases. For example, hateful conduct or speech may violate codes of conduct in the workplace, housing, school, or on social media platforms.



What should you do if you experience hate?

Victims of hate should first make sure they are safe and seek medical care, if necessary. Next, victims should consider the following steps:

- Contact local law enforcement
- Write down the exact words exchanged and a detailed description of the events with dates and times
- Save all evidence and take photos, including of any vehicles involved
- Get the contact info of any eyewitnesses

Who can you call?

Local law enforcement

In the event of a crime, report the incident to local law enforcement by calling 911.

Attorney General's Civil Rights Division

Report hate incidents, crimes, or civil rights violations to the Attorney General's Office.

File a complaint: mass.gov/ago/civilrightscomplaint
Email: civilrights@mass.gov
Call: (617) 963-2917

Attorney General's Victim Compensation Division

If you, a family member or a loved one has been the victim of a violent crime, you may be eligible compensation to cover uninsured expenses like medical care.

Visit: mass.gov/ago/victimcomp

How can you be protected?

If you are a victim of a hate incident that interferes with your rights, you may be able to receive court-ordered protections to keep you safe and achieve justice. Depending on the circumstances, the court might:

- Order protection for a victim and others like them
- Require a perpetrator to stay away from a victim
- Prohibit further hateful acts by the perpetrator
- Order monetary compensation for the victim

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

MCAD enforces anti-discrimination laws, including in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

File a complaint: mcad.appointlet.com

Federal Bureau of Investigation

The FBI investigates federal crimes.

Submit a tip: tips.fbi.gov
Call the Boston Office: (857) 386-2000

Learn more

For more information and to find an organization working to combat hate in your community, please visit mass.gov/ago/nohate.

