

Governor's Task Force on Hate Crimes

2019 Education Recommendations

The Task Force believes that addressing hate crimes in schools is critical to creating a more inclusive and respectful society that experiences fewer hate crimes and less prejudice overall.¹ Achieving this goal requires school officials to focus efforts on education and awareness-building activities that establish and reinforce positive school climates for all students, families, and staff. The Task Force believes school and district leaders must take personal ownership of this work to ensure that incidents of hate and bias are dealt with promptly and effectively, in a manner that is appropriate to the circumstances and consistent with school and district policies. The Task Force encourages schools and districts to identify appropriate staff to serve as points of contact and to integrate and adapt the following recommendations with current policies and procedures in a manner that best serves their individual communities.

1. ***Programming for students.*** Schools shall be encouraged to implement research-based curriculum and educational programs that promote awareness, understanding, and acceptance of all people, such as a “difference” visiting program through which people from different backgrounds visit classrooms to share information about their cultures, religions, etc.
2. ***Conduct outreach to parents.*** Schools shall be encouraged to discuss during regularly scheduled parent events the importance of recognizing, reporting, and addressing hate crimes and bias incidents in the schools and the community.
3. ***Relationship between schools and local police.*** Schools and their local police departments shall be encouraged to ensure their memoranda of understanding regarding the role of School Resource Officers include procedures to address the reporting and tracking of hate crimes with a nexus to the school.
4. ***Improved reporting mechanisms.*** Schools shall be encouraged to develop safe, easy, and confidential mechanisms and platforms for students and parents to report hate crimes and bias incidents (e.g., a “Text a Tip” program).
5. ***Develop strategies for healing the school community in the aftermath of a hate crime.*** Schools shall be encouraged to develop disciplinary policies and programs that not only protect students from hate crimes and bias incidents, but also seek to educate students and reintegrate them into the school community. Schools shall also be encouraged to develop plans for supporting victims and addressing the broader impact on other students and the school community at large.
6. ***Create a resource guide for school personnel.*** The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and the Task Force shall create a quick reference resource for school personnel that includes definitions and examples of hate crimes and bias incidents (including the difference between the two), as well as suggestions on age-appropriate responses and resources both inside and outside of the school.

7. **Establish school policies and staff trainings to address incidents involving bias-motivated conduct.** Schools should develop or update relevant policies (including anti-bullying policies and codes of conduct) and staff trainings regarding: (i) reporting and addressing in a timely manner incidents occurring at school or during school-sponsored activities involving conduct motivated by bias on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or disability; (ii) support for students and staff who have been subjected to such conduct; and (iii) appropriate disciplinary and educational steps with regard to those who have participated in such conduct. Information on the difference between hate crimes and bias incidents should be included in such school policies and codes of conduct. Students and staff should be required to read these policies and sign an acknowledgement of receipt and understanding.

Updated Document 01.16.2020

¹ For purposes of these recommendations, a “hate crime” is: (1) an assault or a battery upon a person, or damage inflicted on the real or personal property of a person, motivated in whole or in part by such person’s race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; and (2) the use of force or threats of force to injure, intimidate, or interfere with any person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured by law. *See, e.g.*, M.G.L. c. 265, §§ 37, 39; 501 CMR 4.02. “Bias incidents” (sometimes called hate incidents) encompass a broader category of conduct that includes non-criminal threats, intimidation, harassment, bullying, violence, and vandalism or other property damage motivated in whole or in part by a person’s race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or disability.