U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS)

Helping Communities

Prevent and Respond to Hate Crimes

The U.S. Department of Justice Community Relation Service (CRS) serves as "America's Peacemaker" by facilitating knowledge, understanding, and communication in communities facing conflict, and developing communities' abilities 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 and national origin, and in prevention of and response to actual or perceived hate crimes based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. CRS does not have law enforcement or prosecutorial authority. Rather, CRS works with communities in conflict to help rebuild relationships, facilitate mutual understanding, and encourage the development of local solutions.

CRS's professional staff work directly with state and local officials, community-based organizations, community and civil rights advocates, faith-based groups, and law enforcement on a voluntary and no cost basis. CRS serves as a neutral-third party, and its services are confidential.

What is a hate crime?

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a federal hate crime (also known as bias crime) is a "**criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.**" States vary with regard to the groups or identities protected under state hate crime statutes, the range of crimes covered, and the penalty enhancements for offenders.

How does CRS help communities prevent and respond to alleged hate crimes?

CRS brings together diverse leaders and stakeholders to educate communities on hate crimes and to find collaborative solutions for hate crime prevention and response.

Specific CRS services that help communities address hate crimes include ▼

Facilitated Dialogue

CRS facilitates meetings between community leaders, city officials, law enforcement and other key stakeholders to open lines of communication and promote problem solving in cases of alleged bias/hate crimes. Frequently discussed topics include alleged bias/hate crimes or incidents, law enforcement practices for responding to alleged bias/hate crimes or incidents, clarifying local bias/hate crimes laws, protests, demonstrations, and other community responses, along with other issues important to the community.

Hate Crime Forums

This half-day forum provides community members and law enforcement with information related to the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, as well as state and local hate crimes laws. The program engages local law enforcement, district attorneys, federal law enforcement, and community advocacy organizations in discussions and information sharing on methods to combat and respond to bias incidents and hate crimes.

Protecting Places of Worship Forums

This half-day forum provides faith-based leaders and congregations with information about religious hate crimes, local, state and federal law enforcement threat assessments, and steps to protect places of worship from potential hate crimes and other threats of violence. The program encourages the implementation of a security program, offers best practices for security, fosters networking and community outreach, and provides resources such as examples of security plans and community responses.

City or School-Problem Identification & Resolution of Issues Together (City SPIRIT and School SPIRIT)

This eight-hour problem-solving and resolution program brings together representatives from local government, schools, communities, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, and others to identify and analyze issues impacting the community, facilitate collaborative approaches to resolving conflicts, and facilitate the development of concrete actions between the parties.

Community Awareness Training

CRS provides trainings to law enforcement, government officials, and others on customs, cultures, and practices of various communities to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. These trainings include Engaging and Building Partnerships with Muslim Americans, Engaging and Developing Partnerships with Sikh Americans, and Law Enforcement and the Transgender Community Training. These interactive and informative trainings include topics such as cultural symbols and language, impacts of hate crimes, and best practices for engagement and problem solving. Ultimately, these trainings support law enforcement's role in protecting and serving all members of their communities.

Mediation

CRS provides mediation services to help communities resolve conflicts and tensions through face-to-face negotiations between stakeholders. The goal of mediation is to develop written agreements between parties which increase trust, improve community partnerships, and build local capacity to prevent and respond to future conflicts.

Where We Work

CRS Headquarters
Washington, DC

CRS Regional Offices

New England
Boston, MA

Northeast
New York, NY

Mid-Atlantic
Philadelphia, PA

Southeast
Atlanta, GA

Midwest
Chicago, IL

Southwest
Dallas, TX

Central
Kansas City, MO

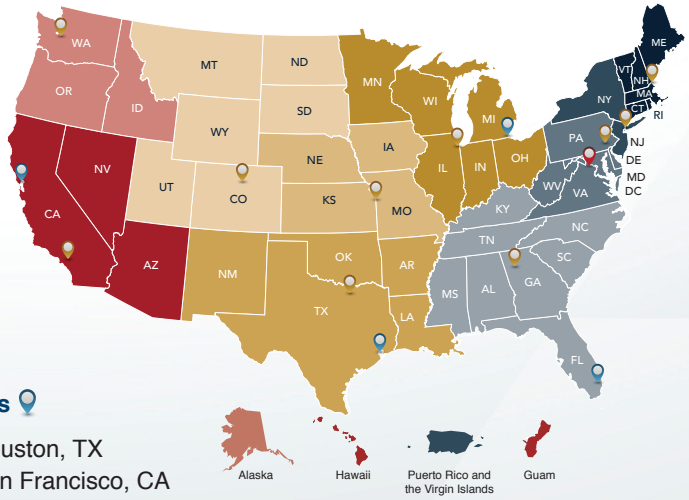
Rocky Mountain
Denver, CO

Western
Los Angeles, CA

Northwest
Seattle, WA

CRS Field Offices

Miami, FL
Detroit, MI
Houston, TX
San Francisco, CA



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