U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service

Empowering Students

To Collaboratively Identify & Address School Conflicts

The United States Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS) helps students to address school conflicts through its **S**tudent **P**roblem **I**dentification & **R**esolution of **I**ssues **T**ogether (School-SPIRIT) program. The program helps schools address tension and conflict related to issues of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

CRS, along with trained volunteer facilitators, delivers the School-SPIRIT program, which brings together diverse groups of students to identify and address issues over a full day or two half-days. The program is student-driven and helps students develop problem solving skills, including issue identification and prioritization, decision-making, and solution development. As a result, students take a leadership role in addressing conflicts in their schools and build the skills and capacity to dissuade future conflicts.

Why should schools consider School-SPIRIT?

Develops student leadership skills by empowering students to identify and address conflicts in their school

Improves collaboration between students and other members of the school community

Brings diverse student groups together to discover commonalities and build mutual respect

Enhances student problem solving skills by using a five-step process to identify issues and develop solutions

Increases schools' capacity to address underlying conflicts by creating a council of student leaders to work with school administrators to implement solutions together

Program Overview

1. Issue Identification
Students work in small groups to identify issues impacting their school, including what works well and what should be changed. These small groups then report their findings to the larger group.

2. Issue Prioritization
Of the issues identified in the small groups, students identify and prioritize those concerns that are most important to address in their school.

3. Solutions Development
The students are reassigned to new small groups to develop solutions for the prioritized issues identified. They discuss the possible impacts and consequences of each potential solution and report their findings to the larger group.

4. SPIRIT Council
Student participants select and appoint members to a SPIRIT Council. The Council is a standing group comprised of student leaders who work with school administrators to implement the solutions developed during the School-SPIRIT program.

5. SPIRIT Report & Convening
CRS consolidates the feedback and information collected during the School-SPIRIT program to generate a report. CRS convenes the SPIRIT Council and school leadership to review the report and develop and implement concrete action steps to address the factors that contribute to the conflicts discussed during the sessions.

About CRS

Established by Title X of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and expanded by the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, CRS serves as "America's Peacemaker" for communities facing tension or conflict based on differences of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. CRS services aim to enhance the ability of local communities to independently and collaboratively prevent and resolve future conflicts through the use of problem solving, increased knowledge, and improved communication.

CRS Services and Programs

CRS provides an array of programs to communities experiencing tension, as a tool for cultivating understanding, improving collaboration, and preventing future disagreements. CRS staff are professional mediators, facilitators, trainers, and consultants experienced in bringing community members together to help enhance their ability to resolve existing conflict and prevent 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

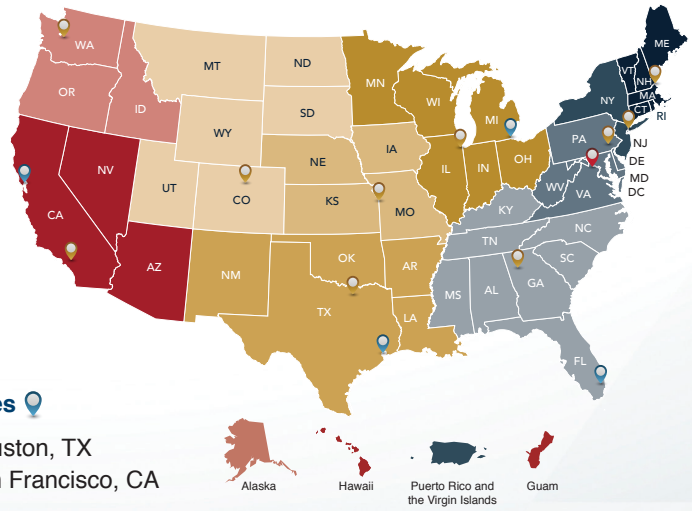
Rocky Mountain
Denver, CO

Western
Los Angeles, CA

Northwest
Seattle, WA

CRS Field Offices

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



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