



City of Chicago
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
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HATE CRIMES

WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?

A man is walking home alone one night after work when two men approach him from behind and yell, "Hey Faggot!" and before he knows it, he is being punched and kicked to the ground.

A family purchases a new home in a community where they are the first African Americans on the block. Soon thereafter, their car is vandalized while parked in front of their home with racial epithets scratched into the paint stating, "NO N@##!%! ALLOWED!" "DIE N@##!%!"

A Jewish synagogue has several windows broken out, and a message is spray painted across the doors stating, "Jews Must Die!" along with several swastikas painted all over the building.

These are just some examples of actual hate crimes.

HATE + CRIMINAL ACT = HATE CRIME

Hate Crimes relate to a specific group of crimes (referred to as predicate offenses) in which animosity against the victim's actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation*, physical or mental disability, or national origin is a substantiated motivating factor for the crime. These predicate offenses include:

- Assault
- Battery
- Criminal Damage to Property
- Criminal Trespass
- Mob Action
- Disorderly Conduct
- Harassment by Telephone
- Intimidation
- Stalking
- Cyberstalking
- Transmission of Obscene Messages

Hate crimes are not isolated to one community, nor are the victims of hate crimes all one group. Hate crimes can happen to anyone, anywhere!

The CCHR works to fight hate crimes in Chicago, and the most important factor in fighting hate crimes is education. Therefore, the CCHR has placed a special emphasis on reaching out to communities across the city to inform everyone about hate crimes. It has also redoubled its efforts to work with communities to support victims of hate crimes, and continues to strengthen its relationships with the criminal justice system to see that perpetrators of hate crimes are punished to the full extent of the law.

Shortly after a report of a hate incident is taken by the Chicago Police Department, the Police will notify the CCHR of the incident. CCHR staff will quickly reach out to the victim to offer support which may include accompanying the victim to court hearings, mobilizing the support of neighbors, community groups and community leaders, and helping the victim connect with counseling services and other resources as needed.

To help reduce and prevent incidents of hate violence, the CCHR works proactively to provide educational workshops to community-based organizations, schools and places of worship on several topics including hate crimes and bullying. Acts of bullying while not usually considered hate crimes, may escalate into hate crimes if not quickly addressed. Workshops are available to youth and adults, and can be provided in English and Spanish.

HOW ARE HATE CRIMES DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CRIMES?

Standing alone, these predicate offenses would otherwise be considered misdemeanors and carry lesser penalties. However, because of the intimidating nature of hate crimes against the victim, and the actual or perceived group to which he or she belongs, the law elevates these misdemeanors to felonies which carry stiffer penalties. Perpetrators of hate crimes are also subject to enhanced penalties if their criminal acts are committed in places of worship, schools, cemeteries, or parks.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I BECOME A VICTIM OF A HATE CRIME?

If you believe you have been a victim of a hate crime, **call 911 immediately and report the incident to the Chicago Police Department.** Tell them specifically that you believe you have been a victim of a hate crime. This is very important! Once a hate incident is reported to the Police they will determine if it was a hate crime in consultation with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office who serves as the primary prosecutor for hate crimes committed in Chicago.

WHERE CAN I OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT HATE CRIMES, AND WHO CAN I TALK TO?

For more information about hate crimes, contact the CCHR at (312) 744-4874.

*Under the Illinois Hate Crime Statute, Gender Identity is included as a category within the definition of Sexual Orientation. The Cook County State's Attorney's Office prosecutes hate crimes pursuant to this statute.