

More information  
for victims



**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
Hate Crime & Bias Incident Hotline: 1-855-225-1010  
We Accept All Relay Calls  
Using interpreters for 240+ languages  
ATG.WA.GOV/REPORT-HATE

More information  
for law enforcement



## **Best Practices for Law Enforcement Responding to Hate Crimes and Bias Incidents**

Hate crimes and bias incidents can deeply impact victims in ways that heighten their fear, affect their quality of life, and cause them to view their surroundings differently. A law enforcement officer's response to victims who experience a hate crime or bias incident can have a significant impact on how they feel in the immediate, short, and long term. An officer's verbal response, body language, and tone all send messages that victims may perceive as concerned, comforting, and safe, or alternatively, disinterested or intimidating.

The following best practices are for law enforcement officers who have little experience responding to hate crimes and bias incidents, and a refresher for those experienced in responding to calls of this nature.

Definition: A hate crime refers to a criminal act that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the perpetrator's perception of the victim's race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. A bias incident may involve similar motivation and includes actions that may or may not rise to the level of a criminal offense.

It is important that law enforcement response reflects:

- A clear denunciation of the bias
- Kindness
- Patience
- Belief
- Support
- Empathy
- Attentiveness
- Care
- Dignity
- Safety
- Options
- Resources

Police should thoroughly investigate each report of a hate crime, but at initial contact, officers should avoid questioning the credibility of the person reporting and instead focus on offering immediate safety, emotional support, and appropriate referrals.

Suggested language for law enforcement:

- I'm so sorry this happened. OR No one deserves this. OR This is not your fault. OR What happened was not ok.
- Would you prefer to use an interpreter to talk to me?
- I imagine this might be very \_\_\_ [read the person: scary, isolating, humiliating, disheartening, disappointing, etc.]
- I want to help you feel safe. Is there a support person who can be here to help you feel safe right now?
- I have time to listen to you, tell me what happened. I will be taking notes about what you tell me.
- Why do you think this happened? OR Do you feel like there was a reason this happened?
- Thank you for reporting this.
- Law enforcement takes this type of conduct/behavior/language very seriously.
- This conduct does not represent what I believe.
- There is a resource/hotline in our community that can help support you.