



## **WESTCHESTER COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Proposal on Policy & Procedures for Reporting & Preventing Hate Incidents

Submitted to Westchester County Executive George Latimer

October 19, 2018

Westchester County has experienced a rising number of reported hate incidents over the past 24 months. The Human Rights Commission has observed an uneven response from law enforcement agencies and municipalities, causing confusion and concern among county residents. The Commission is also aware that many hate incidents often go unreported, due to a lack of information and/or training regarding reporting.

The WCHRC offers this proposal to develop Westchester County as a leader in hate incident response, reporting, prevention and education in New York State.

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1. Definition & Reporting of Hate Incidents
2. Training
3. Education & Outreach
4. Communications

## **1. Definition & Reporting of Hate Incidents:**

### *DEFINITION:*

A hate incident is an act motivated by prejudice or hatred that targets individual/s, group/s, or private / public property because of a perception or belief about the target/s': Race, Color, National Origin, Ethnicity, Ancestry, Gender Identity / Expression, Sexual Orientation, Religion (including religious practices, religious attire), Language, Age, and Disability (apparent or non-apparent).

Furthermore;

1. Hate incidents are intended to intimidate the targeted group or individual. They are not necessarily crimes as defined by local, state, or federal penal codes.
2. Hate incidents can involve some of the same conduct found in local, state, or federal penal codes, and still **not** meet one or more of the legal criteria required of a crime.
3. Hate incidents can include conduct and communication in various forms.
4. Regardless of whether a hate incident meets the legal definition of a crime under the penal code, victims tend to experience the same range of emotions. They can feel: harassed, threatened, abused, anxious, fearful, and/or psychologically traumatized.
5. Hate incidents should be reported by everyone.

### **The HRC propose the following:**

- Collaboration between the Westchester County District Attorney's Office, the Westchester County Commission of Public Safety and the Westchester County Human Rights Commission, including determining the best location to store hate incident data.
- Hate incidents will be reported to local law enforcement and/or to the WCHRC via multiple media options – phone/hotline, web-based data collection tool, reporting app, email, and in-person reporting at the HRC office.
- Develop an HRC mobile-based application for accessible and easy reporting.
- The HRC recommend legislation pursuant to 700.9.L of the Westchester County Human Rights Law for the purpose of carrying out this plan.

## **2. Training:**

**The HRC proposes implicit bias and hate crimes/incidents investigative training, including using qualified third-party trainers.**

- Recommended groups to be trained may include: municipal leaders, law enforcement, school superintendents, school leaders, faith-based community leaders, college campus safety offices and diversity staff, leaders in the local communities, and county government department heads.

## **3. Education & Outreach:**

**The HRC proposes an education and outreach plan for the County.**

- Hire a full-time staff person for the Commission to work solely on education and outreach. Duties include:
  - Work with the CE's office to create a bridge with the County DA's Office.
  - Collaborate with the Commission on Public Safety in sharing and analyzing data on hate incidents.
  - Formulate and implement a targeted education and prevention plan for impacted communities.
  - Develop and offer educational programs for schools and college campuses.
  - Utilize county agencies, commissions, and stakeholder groups to help amplify the educational campaigns for the public.
  - Develop continual educational opportunities for leadership cohorts within the County, such as faith-based leadership, educators, municipal leaders, and law enforcement.
  - Connect and collaborate with existing community groups & vulnerable populations on addressing hate incidents.
  - Deliver public awareness campaign to vulnerable populations regarding the accessibility and necessity of reporting hate incidents. Examples: Centro Hispano, the LOFT, NAACP, WJC, AMWA.
  - Develop workshops and trainings with experienced third-party organizations to educate community leaders on best practices in addressing hate incidences.
  - Develop a holistic age-appropriate education campaign for children and youth.
  - Develop a holistic education program with the Youth Council from the County Youth Bureau.

#### **4. Communications:**

##### **The HRC proposes a communications campaign for the county.**

- Create a Proactive Communications campaign –the proactive communications campaign will include a call to action, which includes detailed instructions for residents to report hate/bias incidents, posters and public service announcements.
- Create a Reactive Communications campaign – Actions that can be taken by the HRC, community partners and the public after a hate incident has occurred. *See attached presentation.*
- Create a Rapid Response Team to respond immediately within hours of a hate incident in the County. The HRC will work with existing community and faith-based groups who have already developed their own rapid response system and coordinate/collaborate with them.

The Human Rights Commission believes the outlined recommendations will help carry out the mandates of the Westchester County Human Rights Law and promote the dignity and mutual respect that all County residents deserve.

Respectfully yours,

Rev. Doris K. Dalton, Chair of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission,

And the Board members of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission: John Baker, Hon. Eddie Mae Barnes, Jennifer Bernhard, Zenaida Bongaarts, Doris Capello, George Castellanos, Andre Early, Shahana Hyder, Farah Kathwari, Thomas Koshy, Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue, Harry Singh and Gary Trachten, Esq.,

And the Staff of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission: Jerrice Duckett Epps, Esq., Saad Sidiqqi, Esq., Diane Balistreri and Marco Correa.