

Important Issues to Address When Assisting Bias Crime Victims

- Tell the victim you are sorry the incident happened.
- Believe the victim.
- Allow victims to tell their story in their words.
- Allow the victim to vent feelings, even if they are hard for you to hear.
- Be extremely sensitive to and respectful of the victim, especially regarding cultural differences.
- Inform the victim about the usual range of emotional responses to victimization.
- Protect the victim's anonymity whenever possible.
- Do not make assumptions about the victim.
- Do not blame the victim or allow personal value judgments to intrude.
- Do not question victim's judgment of their own safety.
- Use appropriate terminology; do not use biased terms.
- Refer victim for support and assistance.
- Be aware of the possibility of prior victimization. Victims of hate crime have often been previous victims of hate crime by the same perpetrator or experienced other incidents of victimization. Frequently, victims have not reported these prior incidents to the police.

- Acknowledge the unique impact of crimes motivated by hatred or prejudice especially in terms of the physical, emotional, financial and secondary impacts.
- Acknowledge the victim's feelings of objectification and degradation and let the victim know that these issues are particularly difficult for the victims of bias crime to discuss.
- Acknowledge that victims may feel the long-term impact of prior victimization and discrimination.
- Address the level of fear the victim may feel. Because hate crimes are message crimes, they terrorize victims. Directly address with the victim what steps may be taken to reduce this fear.
- If the incident has come to the attention of the media, address issues relating to the media. Ask the victim if someone can act as a media liaison for him or her.
- Acknowledge institutional prejudice and its impact on the victim. Inquire as to any barriers to accessing services; for example, the victim may encounter physical, linguistic, or cultural barriers in pursuing a legal case or obtaining services.
- Acknowledge victims' potential fear in reporting the crime and pursuing their cases in the court system. Victims of crime who are immigrants without legal papers may fear deportation. Victims of homophobic hate crime may fear disclosure. All groups may fear dealing with legal authorities.
- Refer victims to culturally appropriate services.
- Educate yourself about the medical and legal systems in your jurisdiction. Determine what kinds of information law enforcement will need to build a case and what types of questions the victim must be prepared to answer.
- Understand the laws relating to civil rights violation and hate crimes and what is required to convict an offender under those laws.