

Responding to Antisemitic Incidents: A Resource for URJ Communities

DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ADL AND THE URJ



WWW.ADL.ORG/REPORTINCIDENT-URJ

About ADL and the URJ



ADL is a leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry, its timeless mission is to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all.

Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of hate with the same vigor and passion. ADL is the first call when acts of antisemitism occur. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education and fighting hate online, ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate. More at www.adl.org.



The Union for Reform Judaism strives to create a more whole, just and compassionate world. We motivate people from diverse backgrounds to participate in and deepen their engagement with Jewish life; create a more inclusive Jewish community; help congregations stay adept and agile; develop teen and adult leaders to lead transformation for the future; foster meaningful connections to Israel; and agitate for a more progressive society.

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CONTENTS

Responding to Antisemitic Incidents: A Resource for URJ Communities

| | |
|--|---|
| What this Toolkit Addresses | 1 |
| How to Use this Toolkit Effectively..... | 2 |
| Reporting Incidents | 3 |
| How ADL Can Support You..... | 5 |
| How the URJ Can Support You | 6 |

Understanding Antisemitism: An Ever-Changing Hate.....7

| | |
|---|----|
| Who Makes Up the Jewish Community?..... | 8 |
| What is Antisemitism? | 9 |
| Criticism of Israel: Antisemitic? | 10 |
| What about Antisemitism and White Supremacy? | 12 |
| What about Antisemitism Outside of White Supremacy? | 13 |

Community Incidents.....14

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Prevention and Preparation: | 15 |
| Community Relations..... | 15 |
| Create a Community Safety Committee | 17 |
| Determine Roles and Responsibilities | 18 |
| Responding to Incidents Proportionally..... | 19 |
| Whom to Call | 20 |
| Security Plan and Procedures..... | 21 |
| 2. Stabilizing the Situation and Supporting Targets and Victims | 23 |
| 3. Documenting the Incident..... | 25 |
| 4. Communicating Quickly and Clearly | 26 |
| Initial Communications with Congregants and Community..... | 26 |
| Guidance for Respecting Individual Targets, Victims, and their Families..... | 27 |
| Communicating with the Media | 28 |
| Resources to Educate and Empower Your Community | 29 |
| 5. Community Healing..... | 32 |
| Turning to Religious Texts for Support | 33 |
| 6. Activating Allyship and Advocacy | 36 |
| Incidents by Type:..... | 37 |
| Emails, Letters and Phone Calls..... | 37 |
| Propaganda Distribution by Extremist Groups | 39 |
| Graffiti, Vandalism and Breaking and Entering | 40 |
| Verbal Harassment..... | 42 |
| Arson and Acts of Violence | 44 |

CONTENTS

- Online Incidents46
 - Preventing Online Incidents48
 - Responding to Online Incidents.....50
- Other Common Situations52
 - School-Based Incidents.....53
 - For Our Communities in the United States53
 - Religious Accommodations.....53
 - First Amendment Issues54
 - Hate Speech.....54
 - Teaching versus Celebrating Religious Holidays in Public Schools.....55
 - Proselytizing.....55
- United Against Antisemitism56



WHAT THIS TOOLKIT ADDRESSES

Clergy, congregational staff and lay leadership play a critical role in responding to antisemitic incidents. You are often on the frontlines or among the first notified of an incident, providing leadership, advice and reassurance in times of crisis.

ADL and the URJ have jointly developed this toolkit to assist you in preparing for and responding to incidents of antisemitism.

WITHIN THIS TOOLKIT YOU WILL FIND:

- An explanation of antisemitism, including guidance on when criticism of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism, to establish a common understanding for your staff and lay leaders.
- Six steps that should be incorporated into an effective response.
- Checklists for common incidents to help you think through and consider various options for your community.
- Guidance on preventing and responding to incidents that take place online.
- Background information on other common concerns related to antisemitism that are often brought to ADL and the URJ.

Responding to incidents of antisemitism is not an exact science. Every response requires judgment and knowledge of the community itself.

The information and advice provided in this document is based on the collective experience of ADL professionals in dealing with thousands of such incidents every year, and the URJ's work with congregations and communities who have experienced such acts of antisemitism.

Some of the advice provided here will resonate deeply with your community, while other sections may seem less applicable. We encourage you to build upon and add to this resource so that it is most useful to your community.

We hope that this toolkit will serve as a resource for all members of the Jewish community. Guidance can be adapted to fit the needs of congregations across the denominational spectrum and even other faith communities that experience bias incidents.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT EFFECTIVELY

We strongly encourage you to review this resource throughout the year. Implementing preventative strategies and making proactive plans to respond to incidents is essential.

As much as possible, organize and engage with a diverse team of people (with inclusion based on race, ethnicity, age, income, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, political beliefs, etc.) in order to ensure that multiple perspectives are incorporated in your response protocols. This group should review this document and update safety plans annually to ensure that professional and lay leadership understand their roles and your protocols regarding incident response.

Include incident response training in your onboarding process for new staff and lay leaders, keeping in mind that this training might look different depending on a particular person's job, responsibility or role. For lay leaders, it might be more important to offer training regarding recognizing and reporting incidents, whereas for senior staff, a comprehensive training may be more appropriate.

REPORTING INCIDENTS



WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:

Reporting is key to working together to make our communities safe for all.

We can best address what we can measure.

Making incident reporting a priority for you, your synagogue's leadership and your congregants will help your community in the short and long term. When you report antisemitic incidents to ADL, we are better able to help communities across the country by encouraging appropriate allocation of resources, advocating for stronger protections from incidents and crimes and, perhaps most importantly, assisting targets of bias, bigotry and hate.

Underreporting continues to be a challenge.

In many communities, victims of bias crimes and antisemitic incidents – particularly those in marginalized communities – face significant barriers to reporting hate crimes. We know that there is significant underreporting of hate crimes by law enforcement agencies to the FBI, particularly in locations where doing so remains voluntary. In light of these trends, reporting incidents to ADL remains critically important, as it can help us understand where and how communities are being affected by antisemitism and hate.

Elected officials and policymakers respond to data, and data drives policy.

We use data to educate policymakers and community leaders regarding antisemitism and hate. When we can identify and quantify the effects of antisemitism, it makes it more probable that decisionmakers will respond with funding and policy initiatives to combat hate.

HOW TO REPORT

If you or a congregant have experienced or witnessed an incident of antisemitism, extremism, bias, bigotry or hate of any kind, please report it to ADL & the URJ:

WWW.ADL.ORG/REPORTINCIDENT-URJ

When you report through this form, ADL will assess the situation and respond as quickly as possible. Reporting will also allow the URJ to respond to you and your needs in both practical and pastoral ways. Any personal information provided will be kept strictly confidential unless you provide express permission to share it. If the incident is an emergency, or if you or a congregant are in imminent danger, always call 9-1-1 first.

Please note that you can report any antisemitic incident to ADL and the URJ, regardless of how minor or seemingly insignificant it may seem to you. Incidents do not need to meet a standard of illegality or criminality for them to cause harm. We cannot stress enough the importance of letting ADL and the URJ know what is happening in your congregations and communities so we can better prepare, respond and assist.



HOW ADL CAN SUPPORT YOU

ADL is a leader in responding to antisemitism on an individual, organizational and community level. [Reach out to your local ADL office](#) proactively to establish a relationship and discuss how ADL can help address your community's needs.

ADL MAY BE ABLE TO HELP BY:

- Taking the initial report of an antisemitic incident.
- Providing guidance regarding questions that may be helpful to ask a reporting party, law enforcement or other involved parties.
- Brainstorming immediate next steps and long-term plans in the aftermath of an incident.
- Providing guidance regarding internal and external communications.
- Liaising with law enforcement, government officials or other parties.
- Assisting in planning a community gathering, solidarity rally or other public event.
- Attending a press conference or other gathering.
- Identifying hate symbols and providing information about extremist groups.
- Providing assistance and resources regarding antisemitic incidents in schools.
- Reviewing mailings, faxes or online content for antisemitic themes.
- Elevating complaints regarding online content to social media and internet platforms for review and removal.
- Connecting congregations with the appropriate law enforcement entity or entities for the situation, if warranted.
- Connecting congregations and communities with appropriate community resources, such as legal and civil rights entities (e.g., EEOC).
- Providing situation-specific ADL resources (e.g., toolkits for school and university responses to incidents).

Need help in an area not listed? [Reach out to your local ADL office](#) to see if they can provide assistance.

HOW URJ CAN SUPPORT YOU

The URJ can help support congregations and communities by providing connections to our network of Reform congregations throughout North America, offering pastoral support, and providing written resources that will help your community navigate its experience.

BELOW ARE WRITTEN RESOURCES THAT MAY BE OF HELP AND STEPS THE URJ CAN TAKE TO ASSIST.

- [Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(REDI\) Homepage](#)
- [Audacious Hospitality Resource List](#)
- [Sign up for email alerts](#) and newsletters from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), the social justice hub of the Reform Movement, providing you with North American, state, and provincial opportunities.
- Learn more about how to get involved in [the RAC's work and connect with others working for social justice in The Tent](#), the URJ's collaboration and communications platform for Reform Jewish leaders.
- Join the [Safety and Security Group in the Tent.](#)
- Provide pastoral support and care.
- Support clergy and staff as they lead communities through an incident.
- Connect your congregation to other congregations who have experienced similar challenges and situations.
- Plan and prepare follow up tasks and action items.
- Mobilize the local and North American Reform community to provide support as needed.
- Provide guidance on internal and external communications.
- Engage with the URJ camping system in response to incidents.
- Connect congregations to Movement-wide partners (ACC, ARJE, CCAR, ECE-RJ, HUC-JIR, MRJ, PEP-RJ, WRJ, WRN, etc.)
- Support financial efforts, such as fundraising for repairs, in response to an incident.



UNDERSTANDING
ANTISEMITISM:
AN EVER-CHANGING HATE

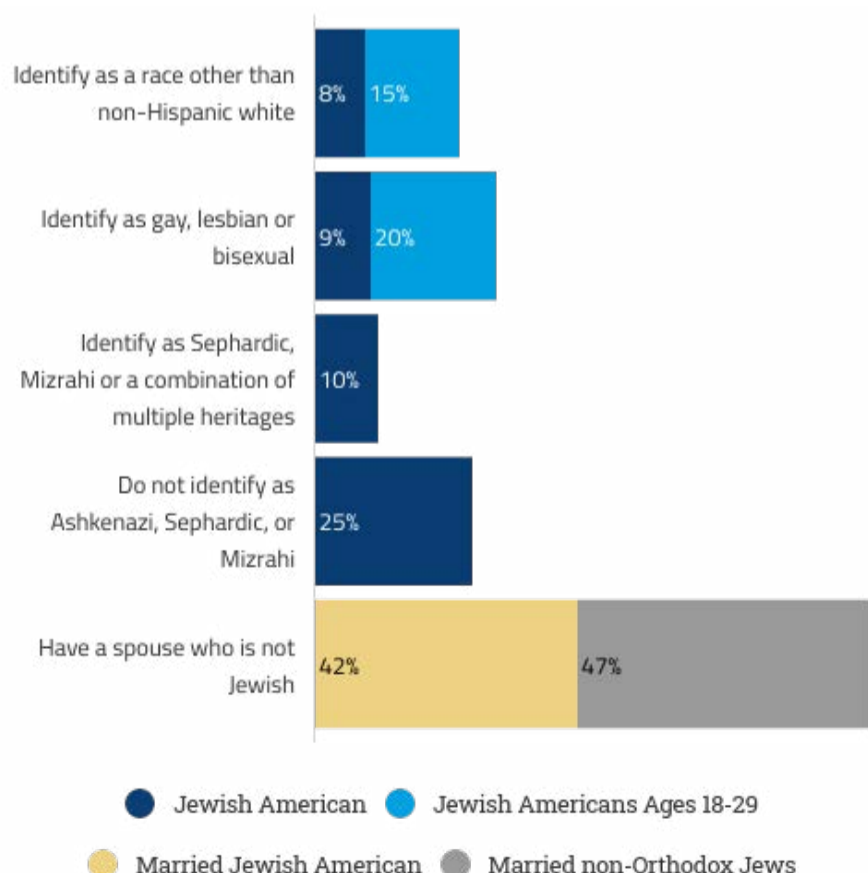
Who Makes Up the Jewish Community?

For centuries, Jewish communities have been established all over the world. These communities have been distinct from other cultures in the countries where they reside, as well from Jewish communities in other countries, often creating their own languages, foods, music, liturgy and holiday practices. Often times, these communities have also integrated into the larger community in their home countries. Today, researchers estimate that there are between 15 and 18 million Jews worldwide. Approximately 5.3 million Jews reside in the U.S., constituting roughly 2.2% of the U.S. population.

When we talk about the targets of antisemitism, we must consider the broad range of people who make up the Jewish community. Indeed, Jews are a racially and ethnically diverse community, encompassing people of every race, gender and economic status, as well as people from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For decades, the Reform Jewish community has worked to make Judaism (and Jewish communal spaces) affirming and inclusive for all Jews, Jewish-adjacent family members and allies.

Due to mass immigration of Eastern European Jews to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the majority of the American Jewish community is of Ashkenazi descent (sometimes identified as white in the American social construct). However, just like almost every community in North America, today's Jewish community only continues to grow more racially and ethnically diverse.

Pew Research Center's recent study "[Jewish Americans in 2020](#)" reveals the following statistics:



8% of Jewish American adults identify as a race other than non-Hispanic white. Among Jews ages 18 to 29, this number increases to 15%.

9% of Jewish Americans identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Among Jews ages 18 to 29, this number increases to 20%.

10% of American Jews identify as Sephardic, Mizrahi or a combination of multiple heritages. 25% of Jews do not identify as Ashkenazi, Sephardic, or Mizrahi.

42% of married Jews have a spouse who is not Jewish. Among married non-Orthodox Jews, this number increases to 47%.

And the CDC reports that one in four people in America (26%) lives with a disability. These statistics represent but a fraction of the Jewish people's depth of diversity, evidence of an American Jewish community vast and varied in terms of race, ethnicity, disability status, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, theology, socioeconomic and immigration status and more.

In order to create truly inclusive spaces for all Jews, we must consider the ways in which racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, xenophobia, anti-LGBTQ+ bias and other forms of oppression intersect with antisemitism and impact members of the Jewish community in different ways. It's important to note that Jewish people in our communities who have multiple marginalized identities (People of Color, people with disabilities, and members of the transgender community) are disproportionately impacted by violence and discrimination in North America, including in the form of daily harassment.

This helps us understand that to fully support all Jews, we must affirm the many parts of our communities' identities and the discrimination people may face on multiple fronts.

Particularly given the breadth and depth of our own community's makeup, we recognize that no one community is safe until all marginalized communities are safe. We know all too well that increases in antisemitic incidents can often correlate with upticks in other forms of racism and bigotry.

What is Antisemitism?

Antisemitism can be defined as the marginalization and oppression of people who are Jewish or are perceived to be Jewish based on the belief in stereotypes and myths about Jewish people, Judaism and Israel. Parallel to all systems of oppression, antisemitism manifests as the dehumanization or exploitation of, or discrimination or violence against, Jewish people based on [stereotypes and disinformation](#).

Central to antisemitism is the myth that Jews are to blame for society's problems. Historical and contemporary depictions cast Jews as untrustworthy, disloyal, alien and greedy. Throughout history, the scapegoating of Jews and the dissemination of these stereotypes and myths have been used to create collective instability and insecurity in Jewish communities globally. Unlike other forms of prejudice and oppression, antisemitism simultaneously promotes Jews as powerful while blaming them during times of social, political or economic anxiety. This idea illustrates that Jews as a group are often most at risk precisely when many appear to be successful and prosperous.

But like all systems of oppression, antisemitism is more than the sum of interpersonal prejudice or isolated violent incidents. It shares with other forms of oppression certain characteristics such as discrimination and stereotyping. Antisemitism is an amalgamation of formal and informal policies and practices and the misguided beliefs used to justify the persecution of the Jewish people across time. In recent history, American Jews have faced educational quotas, discrimination in the professional sphere, restriction from residential and recreational communities and continued acts of outright physical violence.

**"When our children fear there is danger in openly identifying as a Jew, it is indeed something that should concern us all."
- Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Antisemitism: Here and Now***

Antisemitism is a major threat to our multiracial democracy and to civic engagement. Certain antisemitic conspiracy theories that claim Jews control the government and that Jews determine all policy tear at the democratic fabric of our society. Antisemitism weakens trust in our democratic institutions and our elected leadership and therefore weakens democracy. When conspiracy theories about government abound and the Jewish community serves as convenient scapegoat, it is difficult to have a culture of accountability.

Antisemitism manifests in many forms in our society and is consistently morphing to adapt to new circumstances. It is important to keep in mind that sometimes antisemitic incidents affect people who are not Jewish but are perceived to be Jewish by the perpetrator (e.g., a non-Jewish person is perceived to be Jewish and attacked while entering or leaving a JCC or a kosher grocery store). To learn more about how antisemitism is manifesting in your community, visit [ADL's Tracker of Antisemitic Incidents and H.E.A.T. \(Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism\) Map](#), which provides data on incidents across the United States.

Additionally, we recognize that many Jews experience multiple systems of oppression, including racism, anti-LGBTQ+ bias, misogyny, xenophobia and ableism. When we work to keep our community safe, we must ensure we are creating safety for everyone.

Criticism of Israel: Antisemitic? The Short Answer:

Criticism of any government is an essential element of American, Canadian and Jewish tradition. While criticism of Israel is not in and of itself antisemitic, anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric occasionally does cross the line into antisemitism, especially when Israel is unfairly demonized and/or its legitimacy is questioned.

One perspective from Natan Sharansky — a former Soviet dissident, human rights activist and Israeli political figure — states that criticism of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism when it: delegitimizes or denies the Jewish people's right to self-determination; demonizes Jews by portraying them as evil or blowing Israel's actions out of sensible proportion; or holds Israel to a double standard.



Criticism of Israel: Antisemitic? The Long Answer:

The sovereign State of Israel and its government can be legitimately criticized, just like any other country or government in the world. Criticism of Israeli actions or policies – even harsh and strident criticism and advocacy – does not, in and of itself, constitute antisemitism.

However, criticism of Israel can cross the line into antisemitism. One way this happens is when criticism of Israel invokes traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes, accusations and conspiracy theories. A clear-cut example is when Israel or Israelis are accused of crimes that invoke age-old anti-Jewish conspiracy theories such as medieval blood libels.

Deeper bias against Israel and Jews may also be evident when Israel is held to a different standard than any other country in the world – such as when the Jewish right to self-determination is questioned by critics of Israel who reject Israel's right to exist, based on factors that apply to other nations, as well.

A more complex manifestation of this is when critics of Israel advocate for campaigns or policies that would effectively lead to the demise of Israel as a Jewish state. This potentially affects all Jews who have a religious, spiritual or nationalist connection to a Jewish homeland.

When determining whether criticism of Israel is antisemitic, context matters. Criticism of Israel at rallies or other public demonstrations may not be considered antisemitic, whereas if spray-painted on a synagogue, Jewish institution or other Jewish religious symbols such as a sukkah or a mezuzah, it would be. While speaking out publicly against Israeli policies is certainly acceptable, targeting or holding Jews or Jewish institutions responsible for Israel's actions is blatantly antisemitic.

It should be noted that even if strident anti-Israel activism or language are not motivated by antisemitism, they often create an environment that makes antisemitism more acceptable and fosters an environment where Jews can feel apprehensive, anxious or even afraid.



What about Antisemitism and White Supremacy?

As our friend and colleague Eric K. Ward, executive director of the Western States Center, writes, “Antisemitism animates white nationalism.” Antisemitism is foundational to the white nationalist movement, which borrows from classic antisemitic tropes about a secret Jewish cabal of power to explain the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and the fall of white supremacist Jim Crow legal structures in the southern United States.

Antisemitism and white supremacy have cross-pollinated in the U.S. in a dangerous way. In fact, today, white supremacist ideology, no matter what version or variation, tends to focus on the notion that the white race itself is now threatened with imminent extinction, doomed — unless white supremacists take action — by a rising tide of People of Color who are being controlled and manipulated by Jews. White supremacists portray Jews as intelligent, but also as loathsome parasites (using antisemitic stereotypes such as the “Happy Merchant” meme to convey this notion) who control and manipulate the actions of non-white races to the advantage of the Jews and the detriment of the white race.

As such, antisemitism and white supremacy — and particularly anti-Black racism — go hand-in-hand, and we cannot address one while ignoring the other. The pain of antisemitism and white supremacy is compounded for Jews of Color, who experience both antisemitism and racism at the same time.

To address one of these systems of oppression without the other is like trying to put out a fire in only one room of a burning house. When we work to address antisemitism and dismantle white supremacy, we are making the world safer for all of us, including those in our multiracial Jewish community and beyond. When we join together against antisemitism and white supremacy, we can more effectively combat both violent threats and systemic oppression. When we seek to combat hate, we must never allow ourselves to fall prey to hatred, stereotypes and bigotry against others, as doing so only strengthens those who wish to hurt us.

To learn more about the link between white nationalism, white supremacy and antisemitism, read Eric K. Ward’s piece [“Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism”](#) and ADL’s report [“New Hate and Old: The Changing Face of American White Supremacy.”](#)

What About Antisemitism Outside White Supremacy?

While white nationalism and white supremacy pose major threats to Jews worldwide, it's important to note that there is antisemitism beyond that framework. Antisemitism permeates a wide range of other extremist movements, is promoted by conspiracy theories and is sanctioned by foreign governments. Furthermore, these narratives find voice and audiences online and continue to animate the broader extremist landscape.

In fact, some of the most common antisemitic tropes have had remarkable staying power throughout centuries: myths about power, loyalty, greed, deicide, the blood libel and Holocaust denialism. Today, these same tropes are still modern drivers of antisemitic incidents, finding voice in tweets and public statements of elected officials, or resonating with the extremists who have carried out violent attacks against Jews.

We must remember that antisemitism has no boundaries and no political affiliations and can come from all communities. Antisemitism exists in many facets of our society, across the political spectrum and from ideological sources and non-ideological sources alike. Any individual can perpetrate antisemitism and, in most cases, individuals who commit antisemitic acts are not affiliated with any extremist groups.

To learn more about how ancient antisemitic tropes manifest today, visit ADL's ["Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era."](#)



CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA - AUGUST 12: White nationalists, neo-Nazis and members of the "alt-right" exchange insults with counter-protesters as they attempt to guard the entrance to Emancipation Park during the "Unite the Right" rally August 12, 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia. After clashes with anti-fascist protesters and police the rally was declared an unlawful gathering and people were forced out of Emancipation Park, where a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee is slated to be removed. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

COMMUNITY INCIDENTS:

There are six main components of an effective response to a bias incident. Though the depth and breadth of the response will depend on the severity of the incident, these six steps provide a basic framework for incident response.

01 Prevention And Preparation

02 Stabilizing The Situation
And Supporting Targets
And Victims

03 Documenting The Incident

04 Communicating Quickly
And Clearly

05 Community Healing

06 Activating Allyship
And Advocacy

PREVENTION AND PREPARATION:

When working to assess your community's needs, we strongly encourage you to engage in an open and transparent process with broad community buy-in. There are many ways to prepare your community while also ensuring that certain demographics of people within your community do not feel unsafe or at risk of further harm. To do so, it is critically important to consult with and center the voices of congregants who may share these concerns based on their intersectional identities or lived experiences. In addition, any plan involving security-related issues should involve security specialists, along with community members.

Community Relations

Preparation for responding to incidents also requires establishing relationships with your community. Prior to antisemitic incidents, synagogues should work to build close relationships with community and civic leaders, including clergy and interfaith leaders, neighbors, elected officials, school administrators and first responders. They may be able to provide assistance and support in the wake of an incident.

Interfaith leaders, coalition partners and neighbors:

Building and maintaining authentic relationships will help your partners and allies better understand and respond to antisemitism and all forms of hate. These leaders can in turn educate their communities about antisemitism. Establishing relationships with neighbors can create a cadre of allies who can provide support and help counter antisemitic activity in the community.

We encourage synagogues and their interfaith and coalition partners to engage in implicit bias training and ongoing opportunities for meaningful dialogue. Your Jewish community should put in the work to learn about how other communities may experience bias and oppression, as well.

First responders and law enforcement:

Synagogues should also establish relationships with first responders, including fire departments, emergency medical services personnel and law enforcement. As you explore these relationships and consider what it means to keep your entire community safe, it is critical that the voices of community members with multiple marginalized identities (including those of Jews of Color, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ Jews) are included in conversations about how your community interacts with first responders – particularly law enforcement.

You should use an open and transparent process, guided by your community, to determine what your relationship with law enforcement looks like. Keep in mind the historical relationship some groups – again including Jews of Color, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ Jews – have had with the police and security. These groups likely have a wider purview of and understanding around the involvement of law enforcement in your synagogue community’s safety plan and may have input based reservations.

A strong relationship does not necessarily require a physical presence at services or other events; alternatively, you may wish to have uniformed or plainclothes officers stationed at your doors or a police car stationed nearby. In all instances, it is critical to ensure that law enforcement receives training about the diversity within the Jewish community and how the reality of your Jewish community may differ from their preconceived notions. While it may not necessarily be the responsibility of the community or temple to provide that training, you might consider suggesting appropriate organizations to do so.

First responders should have an opportunity to regularly see and engage with your community and learn about the actual diversity of Jewish communities, particularly with respect to race and gender identity and expression. If it makes sense for your community, consider having a get-to-know you event with law enforcement, organized by a team of people who include people from marginalized communities.

Regardless of the presence you choose, it is important for your congregation to have a standing relationship with local law enforcement and other first responders who can provide professional threat assessment and response. Make a blueprint of your synagogue readily accessible to law enforcement for emergency use.

Communal Security Organizations:

There are a variety of community security practices being used today. Take time to research the security practices being used locally in your community and to ask questions of your neighbors, including local religious and non-religious communities. Like your congregation, they have a vested interest in community safety, and, therefore, it makes good sense to share ideas and strategies. (For more on this topic, see [“9 Things to Consider When Creating an Inclusive Security Plan.”](#))

Consider developing relationships with the following Jewish organizations that focus on safety and security or researching other organizations that serve your community.

- [Secure Community Network \(SCN\)](#) is the official homeland security and safety initiative of the organized Jewish community in North America. Founded in 2004, under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, SCN works across 146 Federations, 50 partner organizations, 300+ independent communities, and other partners in the public, private, nonprofit and academic sectors. They offer training on institutional security, preparedness, cybersecurity and other topics.
- Local Jewish Federation Security Directors: Some local Federations may also provide services to help secure your facilities and installations. These relationships are worth exploring as well.

School administration:

It is equally useful to establish a relationship with your local school administration, including the superintendent and school board. You can help educate your school administration about antisemitic tropes and their damaging impact. Consider asking the school administration to notify you if an antisemitic incident occurs and to include you in the response process. You can play a critical communications role in incident response both by elevating issues with the school administration as a trusted partner and by setting the tone for your community. Knowing your school administration can also be helpful when congregants bring school-based incidents to you. You can encourage the school district to educate students about antisemitism and other forms of bigotry both before and after bias incidents occur.

Human rights or human relations commission:

Many communities have a human rights commission, human relations commission, diversity, equity and inclusion officers or other entities that work to protect civil rights and promote equal opportunity on the basis of race, religion, national origin, disability status and other protected characteristics. Your human relations commission can serve as a key ally in educating the community about antisemitism and improving relationships between residents. Some human rights commissions offer educational programming for the community, while others investigate reports of discrimination and bias.

Create a Community Safety Committee

Create a Community Safety Committee that reflects the entire community you serve. Congregations both big and small can form this type of committee. Be sure to include individuals who may bring diverse perspectives to the table in light of race, ethnicity, age, income, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or disability status. Center the perspective of this group in determining your congregation's processes and protocols to ensure that your plans keep all your congregants safe.

Because we know that People of Color, people who are LGBTQ+ (in particular people who are trans, nonbinary or gender expansive) and people with disabilities are disproportionately harmed by law enforcement, it's important that we engage people from a wide range of backgrounds and lived experiences in our planning. We know that inclusive practices and language evolve over time, so we suggest that you commit to revisiting and updating this committee and your safety plans regularly.



Determine Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities are essential in times of crisis. Staff and lay leaders who may be involved in your incident response protocol should understand their role before incidents occur.

Before assigning any roles, it is worth clarifying that all the members of a congregation share a responsibility to act if they are threatened or unsafe. At the same time, it is important to recognize your own biases; consider asking yourself if you would feel the same way about a situation if the person was of a different age, race or gender.

Some congregations may determine that in these situations, the first call should be to the head of their security committee, clergy, president or executive director, while others may decide to reach out to law enforcement first to assess the potential threat. All of these decisions should be guided by your congregation's Community Safety Committee, which should include the voices of People of Color, people with disabilities, people who are LGBTQ+ and members of other vulnerable groups.

You may consider designating the following roles (and in some smaller communities, the same person may serve in multiple capacities). What is critical is that people understand what is needed from them in the response process. You will want to make sure that these roles are determined with transparency and community input and buy-in.

» **Investigation Liaison:**

This person, typically the executive director, chair of the Community Safety Committee, synagogue president or an executive committee member, is the point of contact with any entities assisting in the investigation. They may be tasked with communicating with law enforcement, the local human rights commission, ADL, SCN or any other organization that assists in the investigation. The investigation liaison will be tasked with communicating the most up-to-date information internally so that others involved in the response are knowledgeable and can appropriately execute their roles.

» **Target or Victim Support:**

This person coordinates all forms of support for individual targets or victims in the wake of an incident. If a specific person or group of people were targeted or experienced the incident firsthand, there will likely be a necessary pastoral response, met by a clergy person or members of a Caring/Chesed Committee. Some incidents can be very traumatic, and victims may enter a stage of shock or grief. Doing basic things may be challenging for victims of trauma, and as a community, it is important to provide support and reassurance.

» **Communications Coordinator:**

This person oversees all external communications and is the main point of contact with the media, drafting any statements to be released to the community. The Investigation Liaison and the Communications Coordinator must be in touch consistently when major incidents occur to make sure that any

messaging accurately describes the situation on the ground. Consider engaging a lay leader with communications experience to serve in this capacity. They should also confer consistently with clergy and, if part of the staff structure, the executive director.

» **Community Healing Coordinator:**

This person, typically a clergy person, will create intentional space for the community to process what has happened. This may take many different forms depending on the incident: making themselves available for one-on-one conversations; offering a space for the community to reflect together through prayer or discussion; and/or helping to plan a solidarity/unity event. Often, in the aftermath of an incident, people will express a desire to do something to help; this person harnesses that energy and determines how to mobilize people toward positive actions.

To determine incident response protocols, we encourage you to think through various scenarios and consider what type of response would be appropriate for your community. You may do so by reviewing the checklist provided in the “[Incidents by Type](#)” section of this document and discussing which actions may be appropriate for your community to undertake in various situations. The proper response for a large congregation in a major metropolitan area with a thriving Jewish community may be very different from the response to the same incident by a smaller, more rural Jewish institution. As you go through the checklists, consider assigning responsibilities to different staff members or lay leaders so that everyone understands their role in a response.

Responding to Incidents Proportionally

You will want to make sure that the response you put forth in the aftermath of an incident is proportional to the incident itself. Sometimes community members try to downplay serious situations or aggrandize minor incidents, but remember: Incongruous responses can detract from efforts to counter antisemitism. By diminishing incidents or failing to report them, we signal that this type of behavior is acceptable and embolden bad actors; by exaggerating incidents, we run the risk of not being believed when something truly serious happens because of previous disproportionate responses. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that different community members will react differently to the same incident; understanding the broader sentiment may impact your response.

If you are in doubt about how to respond to a certain incident, reach out to your [local ADL office](#) or [the URJ](#) for support. The ADL’s Incident Response Team assists in responding to thousands of incidents each year and would be glad to have a conversation with you and provide suggestions on how to proceed. Any personal information provided through this process will not be disclosed without your consent. ADL can help educate your community on antisemitism and all types of bias through a range of programs.

The URJ can help respond with pastoral support, by connecting you with other congregations who may have experienced similar incidents, and by offering guidance regarding next steps, both communally and with external secular and interfaith communities.

Whom To Call

An important step in preparing for incidents is knowing whom to call for assistance. We encourage you to create a list of services in your region focused on the areas listed below.

Often, community members seek assistance from clergy or ADL regarding situations that appear to be antisemitic but are better addressed by other agencies or professionals, such as social workers. These may include situations such as elder abuse, mental health issues and/or domestic violence. If you come across such situations, you will want to direct the person(s) seeking assistance to appropriate resources. Feel free to add other support organizations to your list based on your community's needs.

- First Responders
- Law Enforcement
- Graffiti Removal
- Elder Affairs
- Suicide Prevention Hotline
- Domestic Violence Hotline
- Child Abuse Hotline
- National Center For Victims Of Crime Or Canadian Resource Centre For Victims Of Crime
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Human Rights Commission / Commission On Discrimination Or Canadian Human Rights Commission
- Housing Authority
- LGBTQ+ Advocacy Organizations
- Non-Emergency Police Line
- Director Of Inclusion At School Or District
- Province, Town Or County Department Of Health
- Legal Aid
- State Or Provincial Bar/Legal Association
- District Attorney Or Crown Prosecutor
- U.S. Attorney Or Public Prosecutor
- Attorney General Or Minister Of Justice

Security Plan and Procedures

Using an open, transparent and inclusive method that involves your Community Safety Committee and others, create a safety plan that addresses your institution's needs. Center the perspectives of People of Color, people with disabilities and people who are LGBTQ+ who are disproportionately harmed by law enforcement. Keep the mission and culture of your community in mind in developing this plan, and use the Jewish values that are most essential to the character of your community to guide that process. Explain these values to the various outside partners that may be involved in the plan's creation.

The implementation of the safety plan must be practiced on a regular basis, so review and update it annually. In doing so, consider reaching out to the URJ, [your local Jewish Federation](#), or the [Secure Communities Network](#) for assistance. You will want to develop these relationships well in advance of an incident.

- Contact your local law enforcement agency, SCN and your preferred security partner or communal security organization to conduct a threat assessment and walkthrough of your building. Use this opportunity to educate your security partner about the fullness of the Jewish community, including Jews of Color, LGBTQ+ Jews, people with disabilities and community members with other intersectional marginalized identities.
 - » During this walkthrough, ensure your designated security point person is present. While each assessment will likely differ, be prepared to provide information to the security professional about the physical make-up of your building or anything unique to your congregation or location. The assessor will likely have items to discuss, but it is important to be prepared with any unique information you believe is relevant to your congregation.
 - » Implement as many recommendations from the security plan as possible. In the U.S., consider applying for a [FEMA nonprofit security grant](#), which can help cover the costs of improving the physical security of nonprofit buildings. Many states offer similar programs. Congregations in Canada should consult with Public Safety Canada for more information about grants and other security support, including the [Communities at Risk: Securities Infrastructure Program \(SIP\)](#). Contact your closest Jewish Federation for assistance in applying.
 - » Remember: Security plans cannot work unless your community is aware of the protocols and everybody participates in implementation. Involve your community members in security plan “fire drills” to increase their familiarity and awareness.

- Make evacuation and shelter-in-place plans. Practice these plans multiple times per year with your staff members, security committee, lay leadership and all constituencies served by your organization.
- Because it is generally easier to prevent someone from entering the building than it is to remove them once inside, consider having an usher (or someone else who knows your community well and is aware of the wide range of diversity it either currently encompasses or hopes to reflect in the future) observe or be aware of who enters the building. Ideally, the people in these roles will have completed implicit bias training. If appropriate, you may consider asking them to wear specific clothes or an identifiable marker. Identifying the right balance between openness and safety for your community is critical.
- Consider developing a plan to monitor, manage and/or remove a person who may be a security risk. If you are concerned about a person's behavior inside the building, consider saying, "I need to speak with you. Can I see you outside for a minute?" Have a plan if the person says no. Determine whether contacting law enforcement may be appropriate.
- Have one designated entryway and make sure that all other doors and windows are secure. Ensure that all doors can be opened from the inside in case of a need to evacuate.
- Provide a blueprint of your building to local law enforcement for use in a true emergency.
- Have an active phone line accessible at all times.
- Prepare for how you would continue your institution's operations and services after an incident, such as being able to access important computer data and records off-site.
- Establish an information security plan to protect sensitive data online and offline.
- Ensure all technology, such as security cameras, is working properly. Make sure that cameras do not override video too quickly, as you may lose critical information. Consider adapting settings if you will be away from the building for a long period of time.
- Ensure that everyone at your institution is familiar with [suspicious mail indicators](#) and what to do if they receive a suspicious letter or package. [Print and hang this poster](#) where mail is processed for quick reference.
- Ensure that all members of your team are aware of [bomb threat guidelines](#) provided by the Department of Homeland Security.
- Revisit security plans regularly and update them accordingly.

STABILIZING THE SITUATION AND SUPPORTING TARGETS AND VICTIMS

Make sure that you, your community and any targets are safe and that the situation is under control.

Depending on the severity of the incident, this may include activating emergency response procedures such as shelter-in-place or evacuation plans. It can also include calling emergency response services if anyone is hurt, calling 9-1-1 or local law enforcement to assess a threat or choosing not to enter the building until a security analysis has been conducted. In all circumstances, your top priority should be ensuring the well-being of your congregants, staff and community.

Offer support to those directly and indirectly affected by an incident. In the aftermath of an incident of hate, targets and victims may feel isolated and afraid. There are various steps you can take to show support:

- Be clear about the presence of clergy or other communal staff who can serve as a resource for guidance and support. Pastoral care may come in the form of one-on-one conversations, being with the community for Shabbat services, or otherwise providing support as part of an organized Caring Committee or other small group.
- Talk to the individual(s) directly affected by the incident and ask how you can best help. Support can come in many forms, from being a shoulder to lean on to organizing an official response.
 - » Remember: Some incidents can be very traumatic, and victims may enter a stage of shock or grief. Doing basic things may be challenging for victims of trauma, and as a community, it is important to provide support and reassurance. This is where a Caring/*Chesed* Committee can be quite useful.
- Encourage them to report the incident to ADL and, if they are comfortable, to law enforcement and SCN.
 - » If there is an ongoing threat that may involve extremism, ADL's Center on Extremism may be able to help research and analyze the situation.

STABILIZING THE SITUATION AND SUPPORTING TARGETS AND VICTIMS

02

(cont.)

- » If there is an ongoing threat that may involve extremism, ADL's Center on Extremism may be able to help research and analyze the situation.
 - » If there is an ongoing problem online, ADL's Center for Technology and Society may be able to help secure information or liaise with social media platforms, if necessary.
- Help them think through their options in response to an incident. They may want to speak to the press, explore legal action or organize the community.
 - Encourage them to speak with a mental health professional or seek support from any of the resources enumerated in the "[Whom to Call](#)" section to help them process the incident.

DOCUMENTING THE INCIDENT

03

The third step is documenting the incident. When something happens near or outside a congregation, it can be tempting to jump to conclusions about motive, but your role as a leader in your congregation is to allow the appropriate investigatory party to collect facts to understand what happened. It is best to confirm that an incident is in fact antisemitic or bias-related before calling it so.

While waiting for responders to arrive on scene, do not touch anything; this includes resisting the urge to immediately remove graffiti or other types of vandalism. If the incident occurred in a highly visible area, you may want to consider covering it in a way that would not hinder any investigation or blocking the general public's access to that area.

Remember: No matter how big or small the incident is, be sure to document it with ADL. If you are unsure whether law enforcement should get involved, please call or submit an incident report to your local ADL office. You should immediately call the police if you believe there is an ongoing physical or security threat. Please also [reach out to the URJ](#) so pastoral and community support can be provided.

When Collecting Facts And Investigating, The Appropriate Investigatory Party May:

- Document the incident by taking photos. If you take photos for your records or to include in your report to ADL and the URJ, please be sure to take close-up photos so those reviewing the incident can see the details, as well as photos from farther away so you can see the location of the incident.
- Ask who, what, when, where and how.
- Review security camera (CCTV) footage. Ask neighbors if they have camera footage to share.
- Collect as much information as possible about the suspected perpetrator.

At this stage, it is also important to keep the following in mind:

- If a congregant approaches you for advice on an antisemitic incident that has occurred in the community, ask for details about the situation, including: what steps they have taken to address the matter up to this point, if any; who else, if anyone, they have approached about this issue; and what the response has been up to this point.
- When communicating with the media and the community, choose language carefully. Do not call an act of violence an antisemitic or bias incident until it has been confirmed as such by ADL or other investigatory authorities.



04 COMMUNICATING QUICKLY AND CLEARLY

Initial Communications With Congregants And Community

Prompt, intentional and specific communication from your congregation or organization can make a big difference. Statements from leadership set the tone for the community.

Determine who in the congregation needs to be informed about the incident. Remember, word will get out and travel quickly. It is often better that the community hears from the congregation first to prevent miscommunications or unintentionally increase anxiety.

Initial communications should be timely and measured. They may include the following:

- Describe the nature of the incident (e.g., “swastika on the bathroom wall”). Be transparent and specific. If slurs or offensive language were used, make sure to use censored words (for example, “N-word,” “R-word”) so you do not perpetuate the harm caused by using these words.
- Use thoughtful, inclusive language, and choose terms that respect how affected communities self-identify.
- Denounce the incident and reaffirm your congregational values. You can draw on religious texts for inspiration.
- When appropriate, announce an immediate investigation of the incident.

- When ready, present a clear plan of action moving forward. Are you hosting a community vigil? Are you planning a town hall? Opening Shabbat services to interfaith and community partners? Are you encouraging congregants to send supportive messages to the affected family? Include what you are doing to help the community heal. If there are victims or targeted individuals, please get input and confirm these plans with their loved ones before making any announcement. More suggestions for [community healing](#) are provided below.
- Provide clear guidance and opportunities for allyship for individuals and organizations looking to help. Be explicit about your community's needs. You may ask people to post on a social media, write an op-ed or attend an event or worship service. More ideas for [activating allyship](#) are provided below.
- Share resources, including mental health and educational resources, that will help different constituencies have conversations with loved ones. Resources for caregivers, teachers and the broader community are included below.
- Be clear about what information congregants should be sharing on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as through interpersonal communications, blog posts and online and in-person social gatherings, to ensure that adequate messaging is being shared and to avoid unwanted attention.

Continue to send regular updates and plans for short- and long-term actions to various stakeholders.

Guidance For Respecting Individual Targets, Victims, And Their Families

Communications in the wake of an act of hate against an individual should serve to support those who have been targeted. That said, it is important to ask the targets or victims of such an act what they need.



All outward communications should be respectful of the wishes of those targeted. If there are aspects of the incident that the targets or victims would like privacy, respecting these wishes in your communications is of the utmost importance.

Communicating With The Media

Before communicating with the media, consider the pros and cons of having the media involved, as the media can assist or complicate a response to an incident. Feel free to reach out to ADL or the URJ if you are unsure about whether to bring an incident to the press.



If you do decide to include the media in your response, have one or two people speak on behalf of your community. Consider identifying a congregant with media experience who can be point person, or a local firm that may assist on a pro bono basis. Fielding media calls after an incident can be a time-consuming task that takes you away from the needs of congregants.

Communications with the media should be informative, clear and concise. If the incident requires law enforcement assistance, planning communications with law enforcement may be necessary.

If you are comfortable speaking with reporters:

- Reiterate the messaging in your communications to your congregation or come up with a few talking points you can refer back to. It can be useful to have a pre-planned message that includes information for congregants or other stakeholders.
- Describe to the reporter what has happened and your concerns.
- Describe the impact that the incident has had on your community.
- Consider writing an op-ed in the aftermath of an incident. ([Learn how to write an op-ed.](#))

Resources to Educate and Empower Your Community

In the aftermath of an incident, it is important to encourage discussions of recent events among members of the community of all ages who can be impacted in a strong way by these conversations. When discussing an incident, keep in mind that people experience incidents differently depending on their background and identity. Because of this, it is important to keep an open mind and actively listen to the needs of each member of your community.

Below, we have compiled a few resources to help you have productive conversations and inspire others within the community to do the same. Consider including them in initial emails or communications so your community can turn to them for guidance.



RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES:

ADL and the URJ have created various resources to empower parents to have conversations about current events with their families.

Three general resources to turn to in the aftermath of incidents are:

- "[Talking to Young Children about Bias and Prejudice](#)" provides best practices for engaging in these conversations with young children.
- "[Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate](#)" guides caregivers in providing children and teenagers with the tools they need to understand what has happened and to take steps to challenge hate in safe and effective ways.
- "[Helping Children to Process Acts of Terrorism](#)" - provides guidelines that can help children cope during tragic moments and their aftermath.

ADL's [Table Talks: Family Conversations about Current Events](#) can be used to begin a conversation with children and teenagers about recent events. The following Table Talks cover some of the issues explored in this toolkit:

- [Antisemitism Today](#) (ages 12 and up)
- [Propaganda, Extremism and Online Recruitment Tactics](#) (ages 14 and up)
- [Slurs and Biased Language \(in English and Spanish\)](#) (ages 10 and up)
- [Responding to Cyberhate](#) (ages 12 and up)



RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS & EDUCATORS:

When an antisemitic incident occurs in the community, educators should consider discussing them in the classroom. ADL's free online lesson plans can help educators in your congregation discuss these topics with students of various ages. The following may also be helpful in the aftermath of an incident:

- **[“Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist”](#)**
The surge of antisemitic incidents in the United States is alarming to many. In this lesson, middle and high school students examine antisemitic incidents and explore ways to be an ally and how their actions, whether on a large or small scale, can make a difference.
- **[“Swastikas and Other Hate Symbols”](#)**
In this lesson, high school students consider the significance of symbols in our society and explore what can be done about the prevalence of hate symbols.
- **[“Contemporary Antisemitism”](#)**
To increase middle and high school students' awareness about antisemitism post-Holocaust, this lesson helps students learn about the persistence of antisemitism in its contemporary forms and consider the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression.
- **[“Responding to Violence and Hate”](#)**
This multi-grade curriculum unit provides grade-specific lessons and resources for preschool, elementary school, middle school and high school to assist in addressing the difficult issues of hate and violence, such as school shootings or terrorist attacks, with children at home and in the classroom.

It is important to note that all educators and school community members must be committed to addressing all bias-related incidents in their schools and communities. Failing to effectively respond to bias incidents tacitly condones harmful words or actions, sending a message that safety and equity are not community priorities. By challenging harmful language and behaviors and helping students process bias incidents, educators can actively counter bias, cultivate inclusivity and model how students can do the same. In many cases, clergy members can be wonderful partners for educators in these situations.

ADL and the URJ can assist you in responding to school-based incidents. Consider implementing [ADL's No Place for Hate](#) or [A World of Difference](#) programs in your school or connecting with colleagues who belong to the [Association of Reform Jewish Educators \(ARJE\)](#) or [Early Childhood Educators of Reform Judaism \(ECE-RJ\)](#) for guidance and suggestions for additional resources.

If your congregation has an affiliated school, we highly encourage you to review [ADL's detailed resource](#) for school administrators and educators on best practices for responding to school-based incidents.

Communicating with Other Organizations

When communicating with the broader community and other stakeholders, it is OK to ask for help, support and solidarity from others. Other constituencies within your broader community can show their support by denouncing the act of hate and cosponsoring solidarity events; depending on the specific act, donations of material resources may also be warranted.

Providing opportunities for other communities to show solidarity and support can help prevent incidents from occurring in the future. Indeed, this type of unity sends a clear message to would-be offenders that the type of conduct underlying the incident is unacceptable and unwelcome in the community. Communications with the broader community should be concise and informative, especially in the immediate aftermath of an incident.

Communicating with Elected Officials

Elected officials can support congregations by denouncing antisemitic incidents and educating their constituents about antisemitism and bigotry. When communicating with local, state, provincial or federal elected officials, remember to be respectful and nonpartisan. In the United States, a provision of the federal tax code known as the Johnson Amendment prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations – including houses of worship – from engaging in partisan politics. While you may invite elected officials to speak at solidarity rallies or encourage elected officials to speak out against antisemitism, it is important to avoid endorsing or opposing candidates or engaging with an elected official's campaign.

When reaching out to an elected official after an antisemitic incident, designate one person (perhaps a congregational president or clergy member) to be the primary point of contact. If someone in your congregation has a relationship with an elected official, consider leveraging that connection (with the individual's permission) to generate a faster response. You should also think about who the best contact is within the elected official's office. Federal officials, such as U.S. senators, U.S. representatives, and members of Parliament, typically have local offices in the district, state or province that focus on constituent relations, as well as offices in the capital that focus on legislative activity. While it may be tempting to contact the capital office, district offices are often better positioned to arrange community meetings or coordinate an elected official's attendance at a solidarity event. For more information, including guidance for scheduling in-district meetings, view the [Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's resources for contacting elected officials](#).

You should also encourage elected officials to refrain from politicizing antisemitism. Elected officials must identify and show solidarity against antisemitism regardless of its origin, even if it comes from those with similar political viewpoints. You can help guide elected officials on how to respond to antisemitism appropriately and proportionally, including by not misidentifying antisemitism, overstating antisemitism from political opponents or downplaying antisemitism from political allies. Politicizing antisemitism is not helpful and can even compound the pain and fear that communities experience after incidents of bigotry. For more information, see ADL's ["Responsible Leadership Means Not Politicizing Antisemitism."](#)

COMMUNITY HEALING

05

Acts of bias can send shockwaves of fear throughout the community and have a deep impact. People may seek support from their congregation and/or look for productive ways to channel their emotions and help. Your designated Community Healing Coordinator should keep the range of possible emotions and responses in mind as they develop a plan for community healing. It is important to ensure that those who have been directly targeted are consulted regarding any planned community response.

Broad-based community healing can take many forms, and the response to an incident may incorporate one or more of the elements below. Not all incidents will require a large public response. Remember to keep the response proportionate to the incident itself. Of course, the list below is non-exhaustive; please consider adding items that resonate with your particular community.

- Coordinate listening circles or small group meetings to discuss what happened.
- Issue statements to denounce the act of hate and reinforce community values with broad community buy-in. You may wish to invite elected officials, interfaith clergy and other community groups to join in counter-messaging that shows compassion, encouragement and community support.
- Incorporate the incident and response into worship and general programming for people of all ages. Consider writing a d'var Torah using the Jewish texts below for support or holding space to discuss the incident during religious school or youth group gatherings.
- Organize a rally or vigil in support of those affected. Community vigils or rallies show that hate is unwelcome and provide an opportunity to come together as a community. Invite neighboring synagogues, your Federation and other community groups to participate, and encourage elected officials to attend or speak, if appropriate; consider inviting the media, as well. Welcome the participation of interfaith clergy or groups that represent other communities in denouncing acts of hate.
- Invite a member of your community to write a letter to your local newspaper about their thoughts and feelings about antisemitism and other manifestations of bias and hate. In the letter, explain what your community thinks should be done about it.

Turning to Religious Texts for Support

Throughout Jewish history, leaders have looked to our texts – Biblical, historical and contemporary – to guide us in responding to our communal experiences. They provide context for everything from comfort to agitation. The texts below can be shared to show the wisdom of Jewish tradition as you navigate acts of hatred and antisemitism in your community.

This frame from Mishle can be helpful in emphasizing the power of language for both healing and causing harm.

[Proverbs 18:21](#)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue

משלי י"ח: כ"א
מוֹת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד-לְשׁוֹן

If you would like to frame a message with a more theological, God-centered approach, consider the following two texts. It is important, however, not to encourage a message of vindictiveness toward others, but rather one that emphasizes trust and faith in God's comfort, shelter and protection.

Numbers 10:35

When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say: Advance, Adonai! May Your enemies be scattered, And may Your foes flee before You!

במדבר י': ל"ה
וַיְהִי בְנִסְעַת הָאָרוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוּמָה יְהוָה וַיִּפְצוּ
אֹיְבָיִךָ וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׁנֵאָיִךְ מִפָּנֶיךָ:

[Psalms 27 \(excerpts\)](#)

(1) Of David. Adonai is my light and my help; whom should I fear? Adonai is the stronghold of my life, whom should I dread? (2) When evil people assail me to devour my flesh— it is they, my foes and my enemies, who stumble and fall. (3) Should an army besiege me, my heart would have no fear; should war beset me, still would I be confident. (4) One thing I ask of Adonai, only that do I seek: to live in the house of the Adonai all the days of my life... (14) Look to Adonai; be strong and of good courage! O look to Adonai!

(פסוקים נבחרים) כ"ז תהילים

(א) לְדָוִד | יְהוָה | אֹרֵי וַיִּשְׁעֵי מִמִּי אִירָא יְהוָה
מֵעוֹז־חַיִּי מִמִּי אֶפְחָד: (ב) בְּקֶרֶב עָלִי | מְרַעִים
לֶאֱכַל אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי וְאִיְבֵי לִי הֵמָּה כִּשְׁלוֹ וְנָפְלוּ:
(ג) אִם־תַּחֲנֶנָּה עָלַי | מִחֲנָה לֹא־יִירָא לְבִי אִם־תִּקְוֶם
עָלַי מִלַּחְמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בּוֹטֵחַ: (ד) אַחַת | שְׂאֵלַתִּי
מֵאֵת־יְהוָה אֹתָהּ אֶבְקֵשׁ שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה כָּל־יְמֵי
חַיִּי לַחֲזוֹת בְּנֶעֱם־יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכְלוֹ: ... (יד) קוּה
אֶל־יְהוָה חֲזֵק וַיֶּאֱמַץ לְבָבְךָ וְקוּה אֶל־יְהוָה:

This commentary speaks to both the perpetrators of hateful acts and our communal and individual response to them. Though not a simple request or expectation, in acknowledging an act of antisemitism, the text challenges us to be open to and invite an environment of learning to help break down obstacles to meaningful connection and to unite in a common struggle.

Avot DeRabbi Natan (A) 23

Ben Azzai says:

...Who is the strongest
of the strong?

One who overcomes one's
inclination-to-do-harm?

There are those who say:

One who turns an enemy into a friend?

אבות דרבי נתן (נוסחא א) כג

בן עזאי אומר...איזהו גבור שבגבורים זהו הכובש את
יצרו...ויש אומרים: מי שעושה שונאו אוהבו.

The text below asks that we be active participants in the pursuit of radical connection. This may take the form of proactive invitations to people and organizations that may have misconceptions about Jewish people or have never met Jewish people before, with the hope of furthering education, empathy and relationship.

Avot DeRabbi Natan (A) 12

“Seek peace and pursue it”

(Psalms 34:15). – Seek it out

locally and run to make peace

anyplace else it might be needed.

אבות דרבי נתן (נוסחא א) יב

רודף שלום ובקשו (תהלים לד 15) הא כיצד
בקשהו במקומך ורדפהו למקום אחר

[Using the framework of understanding the difference between antisemitism and anti-Israel/Zionist rhetoric](#), this quote can help put the dichotomy into context.

“What antisemitism does is turn the Jews – “the Jew” – into the symbol of whatever it is that a given civilization defines as its most loathsome qualities. And so, under Christianity, the Jew was the Christ-killer (“His blood be upon our heads and upon our children” [Matthew 27:25]). That’s forever. Under Communism, the Jew was the capitalist. Under Nazism, the Jew was the race polluter, the ultimate race polluter. Now we live in a different civilization, where the most loathsome qualities are racism, colonialism, apartheid. And lo and behold, the greatest offender in the world today, with all the beautiful countries of the world, is the Jewish state.”

– [Yossi Klein Halevi](#) (DePaul University, November 14, 2018)

The following is an excerpt from [a podcast and article from NPR](#), interviewing a handful of Jewish leaders about antisemitism and allyship. Rabbi Sandra Lawson speaks to the importance of remembering that allyship must be rooted in relationship. Her teaching can be used to gently challenge your community to think about how they build relationships and what they can do to strengthen them.

Rabbi Sandra Lawson approaches that question – “who is here for us?” – from multiple perspectives. As a Black, queer, female rabbi, Lawson is at the intersection of marginalized identities.

“People’s allyship should not be conditional,” she said. “It should not be ‘I showed up for you, or these groups – therefore you show up for me.’ you should do it because it’s the right thing to do.”

“And it requires building real relationships”, Lawson said.

Reflecting on the Jewish theologian Rabbi Abraham Heschel’s storied alliance with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. In the civil rights movement, Lawson pointed out that “what gets left out of the story is that they were actual friends. And so if you want to show up for Black Lives Matter, that’s fine, that’s outwardly facing. But the hard work is the internal work that you have to do in yourself to understand racism, antisemitism, homophobia... And that’s the work that people don’t want to do.”

This poem by Israeli/Mizrachi poet Adi Keissar proposes a resilient and strong response in the face of the reality of the persistent nature of hate.

Heaven Help Us / Adi Keissar*

You lift your hands
that you won’t fall into the sea
that you won’t crash
into the sidewalk
you place your hands into
the sun burning
your fingertips
you say the sky
has already fallen
it’s always falling
we are here
to stand up.

*Translated from the Hebrew by
Rabbi Reuven Greenvald

בסיעתא דשמיא / עדי קיסר

להרים את הידים
שלא יפלו לתוך הים
שלא יתרסקו
לתוך המדרכות
להכניס את הידים לתוך
השמש לבער
בקצות האצבעות
להגיד השמים
כבר נפלו
הם כל הזמן נופלים
אנחנו נשארים
לעמד.

ACTIVATING ALLYSHIP AND ADVOCACY

Community healing involves activating and including your allies in the fight against antisemitism. Antisemitism is not a Jewish problem to be solved by the Jewish community, but a community-wide issue that needs to be addressed by all members of a community. Sometimes, though, allies may not understand the impact of a particular act, and you need to explain why your community is feeling a particular way. Other times, allies may not know what to do to be helpful. Providing clear guidance about what support your community needs is encouraged.

Remember: Allyship is a two-way street. The safety and freedom of the Jewish community is directly connected to the safety and freedom of all marginalized communities. Practice allyship for others, just as you want others to practice allyship for you – and if you do not know how to be helpful in the aftermath of a bias incident, reach out to the targeted community and ask.

Remind them that they are not alone.

Consider inviting allies to participate in your response in the following ways:

- Invite your local elected officials, town board, human rights commission or other representative body to issue statements and/or host emergency meetings to discuss the situation at hand and to discuss what can be done at the local level to combat antisemitism and all forms of bias.
- Invite your partners, allies, and elected officials to a Shabbat service or an interfaith vigil, allowing for shared prayer moments.
- Arrange letter-writing campaigns or social media campaigns to show broad community support for those who have been targeted.
- Encourage people to display lawn signs or posters that voice support for the community targeted and/or their opposition to hate.
- Plan school or community events that educate the community about your congregation and foster broader cohesion. Education and awareness can prevent future incidents.
- Write a letter to your members of Congress, member of Parliament, state or provincial legislators or school board conveying your position about important issues and possible courses of action. Connect with ADL and the Religious Action Center to coordinate your plans and ongoing advocacy efforts, as there may already be relationships in place at the local, state and federal level that can be activated for this purpose.

Following an antisemitic incident, you may choose to contact your elected officials to urge them condemn antisemitism, combat religious bigotry, and protect houses of worship. Visit the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's webpage on [antisemitism and hate crimes](#) and its [Legislative Action Center](#), as well as ADL's [advocacy webpage](#), to find updated information about how you can take action. The Religious Action Center and ADL also offer resources on contacting elected officials, including making phone calls, writing letters and scheduling in-district visits.

Incidents by Type

The most common types of antisemitic incidents reported by synagogues to ADL fall into one of the following categories. Below you will also find checklists to guide your response process. Please note that these checklists are a starting point for your response and that responses may vary from incident to incident and community to community; not all of the steps below may apply. You may also expand these checklists to fit your community's needs.

With regards to any of these scenarios, prioritize pastoral care from clergy and opportunities for community comfort. Personal connections are important, and in some cases, communal worship responses will be especially healing. [Worship and study opportunities](#) (for community members of all ages) can include divrei Torah that address what has occurred and how the community can respond.

Should it be necessary to communicate to the whole community, be sure to include [Jewish grounding](#) for what has happened and for what the response will be.

Emails, Letters and Phone Calls

Congregations sometimes receive antisemitic emails, letters or phone calls; occasionally, they include a bomb threat or other threat. If your institution receives such a threat, we recommend you [follow the steps](#) indicated by the Department of Homeland Security. Make sure everyone on your team is familiar with these steps.

Day of Incident:

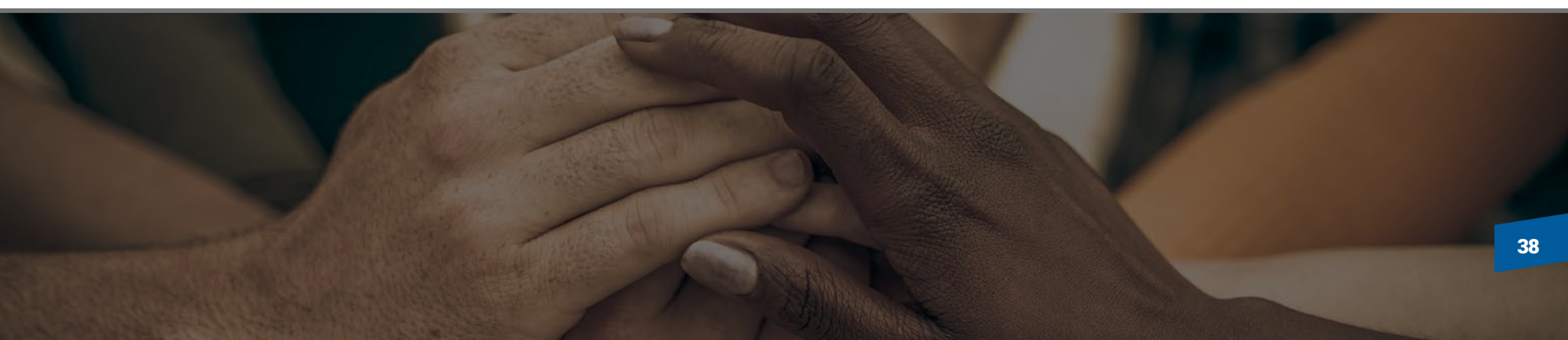
- Collect as much information as possible about the situation. For example, if you receive an antisemitic phone call, write down the phone number, caller ID information and any identifying information you might be able to glean from the call. Try to write down what the caller says word for word. Sometimes, the same person will call a series of Jewish institutions, and it can be helpful to be able to connect the dots. If you receive a voicemail, do not delete it; if you receive a letter, preserve both the letter and envelope.
- Let your synagogue professional team and administrative staff know about the situation in detail.
 - » Determine whether a call to law enforcement is warranted. It is a best practice to report threatening communications.
 - » Determine whether communication(s) to the greater congregational community are necessary. If so, see section on guidance for writing these messages.
- Report this incident to ADL and the URJ at [adl.org/reportincident-URJ](https://www.adl.org/reportincident-URJ) and SCN whom may be able to provide information about the caller or report on trends in your area.
- Provide support for the affected community or staff member(s).

Week of Incident:

- Continue coordinating with appropriate investigatory parties for updates.
- Continue to check in on the affected community or staff member(s).
- With appropriate professional staff and lay leaders, review your synagogue's protocols and procedures regarding bomb threats and harassing phone calls.
- Review the after-action report of the incident and what transpired. Discuss with appropriate professional staff and lay leaders what can be improved in the future.
- Respond to the pastoral needs of your community through learning and text, potentially calling for a special Shabbat practice that week.

Month of Incident:

- Turn this incident into a learning experience.
 - » Provide educational materials and training for your congregation and/or staff based on the incident.
 - » If you are part of an interfaith council, involved in conversations in [The Tent](#) (the Reform Movement's collaboration platform) or part of a social action network or synagogue network through the [Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism](#), start a conversation about experiences with bias and hate. Ask how other groups have handled similar situations.
- If a suspect was identified and/or legal action needs to be pursued, continue conversations with law enforcement and/or legal counsel.



Propaganda Distribution by Extremist Groups

In recent years, ADL has documented an increase in the posting of flyers and stickers, particularly by white supremacist groups. The posting of such flyers on synagogue property and/or the targeting of Jewish families or institutions may be an antisemitic incident.

Day of Incident:

- If possible and not disruptive to normal business, do not remove the propaganda.
- If the propaganda must be removed, please be sure to first photograph the propaganda and make note of its location.
- Report the incident to law enforcement to investigate. Sometimes such instances are part of pattern that law enforcement is tracking.
- Report to ADL at [adl.org/reportincident-URJ](https://www.adl.org/reportincident-URJ).
- Communicate with appropriate staff about the incident and notify building management for awareness.

Week of Incident:

- Issue a communication to the congregational community about the occurrence, if necessary.
- Notify other communal institutions in your area about the propaganda.
- Reach out to other community groups that may have been affected by the propaganda.
- [Reach out to the URJ](#) to connect with other congregations in your area or with other congregations that have experienced similar incidents.
- Follow up on the investigation.

Month of Incident:

- Turn this incident into a community learning and advocacy opportunity.
 - » Read ADL backgrounders regarding the extremist group or groups responsible and check out [ADL's H.E.A.T. Map](#) to learn about the distribution of propaganda over time in your community.
 - » Hold a community conversation and invite other groups that have been targeted or may be impacted by the propaganda to participate. If you have a local human relations commission, consider asking them to host the conversation.
 - » Consider writing letters of concern to your local elected officials.



A member of the white supremacist group, the National Socialist Movement, holds a swastika flag and salutes at the NSM's anti-illegal immigration rally near a Home Depot store in Riverside, California. Photo: David McNew/Getty Images

Graffiti, Vandalism and Breaking and Entering (i.e. graffiti, broken windows, leaving pork products on the property, etc.)

In the event that your congregation experiences vandalism or a break-in, it is always important to consider the context. Sometimes, there is no evidence of antisemitic animus or intent (e.g., multiple homes/buildings are vandalized in your neighborhood, and the local synagogue is one of many targets).

If, however, there is evidence that the property was intentionally selected because it is a Jewish institution (i.e., the graffiti includes swastikas, SS lightning bolts, white supremacist symbols, etc.), the next question is whether the underlying conduct constitutes a crime; note that sometimes Jewish symbols such as the Star of David or a menorah are used to target Jewish institutions, as well.

- If the underlying incident is not a crime (e.g., an isolated incident of leaving antisemitic flyers on the property, drawing hate symbols in the snow, etc.), the incident likely will be considered an antisemitic incident.
- If the underlying incident is a crime (e.g., antisemitic vandalism that causes damage to a synagogue, breaking and entering to damage Torah scrolls, etc.), hate crime charges may be warranted. In addition to reporting to ADL, congregations should always report antisemitic vandalism to law enforcement.

Just because a particular incident does not rise to the level of a hate crime does not mean it is less harmful or should be taken less seriously. Antisemitic incidents and hate crimes both have a lasting impact on a community, and both may require community responses.

Day of Incident:

- Contact law enforcement and notify your security committee, president or executive director. Do not enter the building until a law enforcement assessment is complete, and follow their guidance regarding whether to enter the building.
- Ensure that all staff are safe and provide support as needed for individuals impacted by the incident.
- Take photos of any graffiti, even if it is drawn in dust or snow. Do not tamper with any evidence until law enforcement has assessed and investigated.
- Report to ADL & URJ at [adl.org/reportincident-URJ](https://www.adl.org/reportincident-URJ), as well as to your local Jewish Federation and SCN.

- Communicate with your congregational community quickly and transparently. Your message should include:
 - » A clear description of what occurred
 - » Condemnation of the act
 - » Assurance that it is being thoroughly investigated
 - » Opportunities for community healing

Week of Incident:

- After receiving clearance from authorities, remove or clean up the vandalism.
- Offer opportunities for gathering as a community to reflect and heal.
- If local elected officials have not already been in touch, consider reaching out to alert them of the situation.
- Continue to follow up regarding the investigation, keeping your community informed of developments as appropriate and continuing to offer resources and support.
- Provide resources and materials for various age groups on how to discuss antisemitism. (See "[Resources to Educate and Empower Your Community](#)" section.)
- Provide tangible ways in which other community groups or nearby synagogues can provide support.

Month of Incident:

- Consider applying for a nonprofit security grant to improve your security system. Security cameras, digital doorbells and other visible safety measures may deter future perpetrators.
- Review your response and assess what can be improved upon for future incidents.



Verbal Harassment

Verbal harassment can vary in intensity. If you are in conversation with someone and hear an antisemitic stereotype or trope, consider using one of the following strategies to address the comment, if you feel it is safe and productive to do so.



STRATEGY #1 INTERRUPT

- » “Let’s pause the conversation here to reflect on something that was just said.”
- » “That sort of language/behavior is not acceptable in our congregation.”
- » “Ouch! Let’s talk about that a bit more.”
- » “What I just heard was not OK.”

STRATEGY #2: ASK A QUESTION

- » “What do you mean?”
- » “What do you know about the meaning or history of the language you just used?”

STRATEGY #3: EXPLAIN IMPACT

- » “Do you know how that symbol makes some people feel?”
- » “When you say that, it is really damaging to an entire group of people.”
- » “Statements like that have a long history of causing pain and fear for entire communities.”

STRATEGY #4: BROADEN TO UNIVERSAL BEHAVIOR

- » “Do you mean everyone who is _____, or are you speaking of someone in particular?”
- » “I don’t think that’s a _____ thing. I think lots of different people have that quality.”
- » “You can’t make a generalization about a group of people based on your interactions with (or what you’ve heard about) one or a small number of people.”
- » “Every human being deserves respect and decency.”

STRATEGY #5: CONNECT TO HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- » “What you said feeds into an old stereotype. Let’s talk about where that comes from...”
- » “You may not realize it, but that language has a long history of disrespect, violence and oppression...”
- » “Let me explain how that language was historically used to talk about people...”

Other incidents may require you to follow all or some of the steps listed in the checklist below.

Day of Incident:

- If you are present when someone is verbally harassing another person, deescalate the situation, if you feel safe doing so, and move with the target to a safe place.
- Make note of any descriptors or identifying features of the harasser. These can include physical characteristics such as hair color, skin color, eye color, tattoos, approximate height, body type, age and clothing.
- Call your preferred security partner for guidance on next steps. They can help assess whether the harasser poses a threat to the community.
- If the incident is reported to you, provide immediate support for the targets. Being on the receiving end of hateful slurs can be very painful.
- Alert other appropriate staff of the situation.
- Determine whether communication with the broader congregational community is appropriate.
- Report to ADL and URJ at [adl.org/reportincident-URJ](https://www.adl.org/reportincident-urj), as well as to your local Jewish Federation and SCN.

Week of Incident:

- Continue to provide support for those targeted through clergy connections and Caring/Chesed Committee involvement.
- Consider taking additional security measures, if appropriate.
- Create opportunities for prayer or learning for members of all ages.

Month of Incident:

- Continue to provide support for those targeted.
- Consider applying for a nonprofit security grant to improve your security system. Security cameras, digital doorbells, and other visible safety measures may deter future perpetrators.
- Review your response and assess what improvements can be made.
- Turn this incident into a learning opportunity:
 - » Provide de-escalation training for your community.
 - » Organize a showing of solidarity.
 - » Involve allies from other communities and/or interfaith organizations to provide support.



Arson and Acts of Violence

Every act of violence is different and warrants a unique response. However, in the wake of the shootings at the Tree of Life Synagogue and the Chabad of Poway and after other violent attacks on the Jewish community, we sadly must anticipate that this may happen in our communities and understand what to expect in terms of a response.



Many of the lessons shared throughout this guide are also applicable when preventing and responding to acts of violence.

Prevention:

- » In addition to the guidance provided in the previous “Prevention and Preparation” section, here are some specific tips that may be helpful in responding to violent incidents.
- » We cannot stress enough the importance of having multiple people carrying cellphones during services and other religious celebrations. Do not leave them in your office or your coat pocket.
- » Arrange a small group of volunteers who are willing and able to help with any task in the aftermath of a violent incident. This can be making phone calls, picking up meals or keeping someone company.
- » Consider creating a text messaging group with the leaders of synagogues and Jewish communal organizations for emergency use only. This can help streamline communications and keep everyone in the community informed.
- » Develop a relationship with Jewish Children and Family Services or other social service providers that serve your area. Trained social workers can help targets or victims and families process traumatic situations and provide emotional support. If necessary, their teams can provide additional support to help explain Jewish customs and practices to law enforcement and also explain law enforcement protocols to your community.
- » Consider asking your congregants with children to establish a safe gathering place outside of your congregation to meet in case they are separated.

Response:

- » As soon as you are aware of a violent incident, call 911. If you can, call ADL and the URJ. Both organizations will do their best to get representatives from their team to the scene, if necessary.
- » When law enforcement and emergency response services arrive, they will stabilize and secure the scene and set up a perimeter and command center. Their victims’ assistance teams will come to offer support and guidance, as well.

- » Once the scene is secured, designate two people to be the main points of contact with law enforcement; one of these two people should always be at the scene. You will need to allow time for law enforcement to investigate. Your role during this time is to keep the community informed and safe.
- » The media will likely rush to cover the story. You should have one or two spokespeople who can serve as their points of contact; you may want to engage an outside spokesperson for a major incident. Consider reminding congregants, victims, and others who were impacted that they do not have to engage with the media. Community members and even clergy do not have any responsibility to answer the media's questions.
- » Only share the information that law enforcement has advised you to share. You do not want to impede the investigation.
- » Protect the privacy of your congregants. Do not volunteer names of congregants, victims or people affected unless you have explicit permission to do so.
- » Bring empathy to all communications. When violent incidents occur, the community's safety is violated. Emotions run high and people want answers. Make sure your communications convey the appropriate emotions, provide reassurance, and include useful information.
- » Schedule routine press conferences at designated times so that people can know when to expect more information. This can also help keep the press at bay.

Assign one person to be in charge of organizing community responses. All calls or communication about how others can assist during this time should be directed to that person. They should provide clear directives on how other community organizations and individuals can be of assistance during this challenging time. This can include letter writing campaigns, arranging a vigil or memorial site or worship service, or making donations to support impacted families. Remember to keep in mind victim and family preferences before planning any community response.

Try to maintain community traditions and activities in the aftermath of an incident. Consider finding a temporary alternative venue for community gatherings and be sure to communicate those location changes to your community.



Online Incidents

When advising congregants or responding to online incidents that impact your community, it is important to keep in mind that online incidents have offline implications and can cause trauma just like incidents that occur in person.

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and others are regularly used to spread antisemitic and other oppressive ideas. As a general best practice, we recommend that you use the process enumerated in the [ADL Cyber-Safety Action Guide](#), including taking screenshots of problematic content; reporting it through the platform's reporting mechanisms, and report the incident(s) to ADL at [adl.org/reportincident-URJ](https://www.adl.org/reportincident-URJ).

Social media sites can be weaponized in other harmful ways, as well. Familiarize yourselves with the conduct described below and take steps to prevent these situations from happening in your community.

Cyber Harassment:

When someone engages in electronic communication that harasses, torments, terrorizes, offends or threatens a target. This term is used both to describe individual acts and as an umbrella term to broadly describe types of internet-enabled abuse.

Cyberstalking:

When someone uses the internet and technology to stalk a target. Most often cyberstalking refers to a pattern of online activity, amounting to a course of conduct, targeted at or concerning a particular person, which would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety (or the safety of their family). Cyberstalking may include: sending continued and unwanted messages; secretly tracking someone's location with geolocation technology, to hacking accounts using secretly installed password trackers; and sending a barrage of messages to an individual or their network from fake accounts.

Deep Fakes:

A technique that combines multiple authentic images, videos and/or audio with machine learning technology to create a new, synthetic piece of media (e.g., image, audio and/or video). This technique has been used to create machine-made media of all kinds, including some with the intention of deceiving audiences. Some examples of deceptive "deep fakes" include videos of politicians depicted in situations that never happened or fabricated pornographic videos targeting specific individuals. Audio deep fakes could lead to serious forms of fraud and identity theft.

Doxing:

The broadcasting of private or identifying information about an individual, group or organization with the intent that the information be used against the target for an unlawful purpose. This sometimes involves releasing a private phone number or address and inciting harassment.

Hacking (sometimes known as “cracking”):

This refers to a practice by which a person seeks to access digital devices and networks without permission. This is sometimes done by depositing malware onto a computer, and the purpose of hacking is often malicious. Hacking can also be used to describe someone forcefully gaining access to a social media account.

Malware:

Short for “malicious software,” malware describes software that is specifically designed to disrupt, damage, or gain unauthorized access to a computer system. Malware interferes with or inhibits normal computer functioning. There are a number of different types of malware:

- **Adware:** This is designed to put unwanted advertisements on your screen. While some programs are designed to make the advertisements look real or benign, in some cases adware can also be used to collect information about the user.
- **Ransomware:** This prevents access to certain files on a computer and, as the name suggests, asks for a payment in order for the user to regain access to those files.
- **Spyware:** This kind of software gathers information about its user, such as downloads, highly visited websites, passwords, and credit card numbers.

Nonconsensual Distribution of Intimate Imagery (NCII):

Also known as non-consensual pornography (NCP) or “revenge porn,” NCII is the distribution of sexually graphic images of individuals or depicting individuals in a sexually graphic way without their consent.

Swatting:

The act of falsely reporting an emergency to someone’s home with the goal of having a police unit (usually a SWAT team) deployed to their residence. This can result in injury to the target or other witnesses and has even caused death. People of Color, people with disabilities, and people who are LGBTQ+ may feel especially endangered by the possibility of this kind of unwarranted encounter since they are disproportionately harmed by law enforcement.

Trolling:

In the context of this report, trolling is the repeated posting of inflammatory, hateful, derisive or offensive content on a particular platform with the intent of provoking a reaction from the reader.

Phishing:

The act of deceiving a person, typically by assuming a false identity, into revealing personal or sensitive information over the internet. This is usually achieved through realistic, but fake, emails or text messages. Often, these messages include urgent pleas or concerning alerts designed to cause the target to reveal sensitive information (such as credit card details) without sufficient forethought.

Zoombombing:

The act of interrupting a videoconference (often a public one, like a religious service or funeral) with inflammatory and/or hateful rhetoric or images.

Preventing Online Incidents

As with in-person incidents, prevention is the first step in addressing incidents that take place online.

Reviewing your Online Footprint

We live in a world where we consistently share information about our personal lives on social media and other digital mediums. We tend to share important moments in our lives such as graduations, the purchase of new home, and weddings; congregations may also post information about lifecycle events such as b'nai mitzvah, funerals, onegs, etc. However, people often fail to realize that important information can be gleaned from these public announcements, including where you live, where your children go to school, or who your loved ones are.

Unfortunately, ADL has seen rising numbers of incidents in which perpetrators weaponize publicly shared information, including information shared on social media accounts as well as information collected from synagogue websites. Tools such as Google Image Search also assist bad actors in running searches and drawing dangerous connections.

Perhaps your personal information must be public, as part of your profession or other affiliation; that means it is difficult to ensure that your personal address, phone number and other contact information remains private. Review your digital footprint to make sure that you have not inadvertently shared information that can be exploited.

Online Best Practices

Because incidents regarding publicly shared information are becoming more common, it is important to take preventative steps to ensure that you or your organization are not unintentionally oversharing information online. You can analyze your organization's digital footprint by searching for yourself or your organization on a variety of search engines. Make sure to be comprehensive: look for images and documents that may include your or your congregation's name and review your social media presence to understand the types of information others can access. Consider setting up a [Google Alert](#) for the name of your congregation or your address so you can immediately be aware of any new online references to your institution.

Once you have an idea of your organization's online footprint, there are a number of preventative measures you can take in order to reduce or minimize this presence. Consider consulting with the Secure Communities Network or another security partner for additional recommendations.

- Create a members-only password-protected section of your website for photos, family and congregant event information such as b'nai mitzvah or shivas, clergy biographies, and other personal information that can be used against you or your congregants. Work to ensure that any photos, videos, or other media is only shared privately across other social platforms. Ensure that those settings are set to private.
- Do not share any information online about individual members without consent, including images. Keep in mind that People of Color and people who are LGBTQ+ experience disproportionate amounts of online bullying and harassment.



- Adopt strict privacy settings on your browsers, search engines (i.e., searching in an incognito window) and social media accounts. Consider reviewing app preferences and limiting location sharing of apps on your devices.
- Create strong passwords and change them regularly (we recommend using a password manager like 1Password or LastPass and changing your passwords every 3-6 months). Try to ensure that these passwords do not contain publicly available information (for example, the name or address of your synagogue).
- Keep your devices' software up to date to deter hackers and viruses.
- Deactivate old accounts and delete apps you do not use. You can also limit the types of data that apps can collect in the privacy settings of your devices. [Learn more about deleting unused accounts.](#)
- Ask information-gathering websites to delete their information about you or your organization. [Learn how to delete or disassociate](#) your information from them.
- When possible, use private browsing or incognito mode in your web browser.
- Don't post sensitive or personal information to social media. Even if you have controls limiting the audience for your posts, it is still possible for others to access this information. (Note that because organizational social media accounts are often public, it is even more important, when managing these accounts, to limit the posting of personal information.)
- Create spam email addresses to sign up for non-essential services online. Just make sure to use a different password for this account than your normal account.
- Check the type of websites you use. If the address does not begin with "https," don't use it; if this is not possible, avoid entering personal or organizational information while using that website. Most modern browsers will show a lock or some other symbol in the address bar to help you to know if you are using a secure connection
- Enter personal or organizational information online only if you are on a private Wi-Fi network or using VPN software.
- If you suspect an account has been hacked, change all of your passwords as quickly as possible.
- Sign up for "two-factor authentication" on as many services as possible, especially the sensitive ones, such as financial services. Two-factor authentication uses a second connection, like an SMS or an authentication hardware device that gets "pushed" to you whenever you attempt to log in. This provides for greater security, as an attacker would not only need your password but also the device or hardware key in order to impersonate you.

Reducing the likelihood of incidents of hate that target your community is of the utmost importance. These steps are meant to minimize the amount of publicly available person information online, and by doing so, it will be less likely that a perpetrator can target you, your organization, or your community.

Safety Considerations for Zoom Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other compounding factors, congregations and institutions use Zoom and other videoconferencing services such as Microsoft Teams and Google Meet more than ever. The uptick of Jewish events taking place online unfortunately correlates with a steep rise in antisemitic Zoombombing attacks.

As defined earlier in this resource, Zoombombing is when a virtual meeting is suddenly disrupted by an unknown individual who shows, says or shares something threatening, vulgar or graphic, which may include hate speech. In 2020 alone, 196 antisemitic Zoombombing incidents were reported to ADL, with 114 of them targeting Jewish institutions.

With the continual rise in antisemitic incidents, including those taking place over Zoom, it is important to follow safe practices when hosting virtual meetings. Review [Zoom's security website](#) for best practices regarding keeping your online meetings safe.

Responding To Online Incidents

Day of Incident:

- Document the incident by taking screenshots and saving web addresses and any other materials and chats.
- Try to stop the harassment by blocking and muting users and disengaging from the conversation. Block and mute buttons are usually hidden to the right of the post within a grey arrow, three dots or three lines. Though your impulse may be to engage, such interactions usually go poorly and prolong the issue.
- If you feel like you are in danger, call 911 and file a report with the [FBI's Cyber Incident Reporting](#).
- Report the harassment to the digital platform of origin. Include as much information as possible in a single report; don't forget to mention the historical context of the harassment. Save any case numbers, claim numbers or correspondence you receive from the platform.
- Refer to [ADL Cyber-Safety Action Guide](#), which includes information on how to report antisemitism and hate to numerous popular social media and online game platforms.



Week of Incident:

- Report the incident to ADL at [adl.org/reportincident-URJ](https://www.adl.org/reportincident-URJ) and include all the information you have collected (e.g., screenshots, web addresses and case numbers).
- If your incident involves ongoing antisemitic hate and harassment, consider using third-party tools to manage online harassment or contacting organizations that specialize in providing direct support for targets of online abuse:
 - » Mass harassment: [squadbox.org](https://www.squadbox.org) and [tallpoppy.com](https://www.tallpoppy.com)
 - » Non-consensual pornography helpline: [cybercivilrights.org/ccri-crisis-helpline](https://www.cybercivilrights.org/ccri-crisis-helpline)
 - » Personal counseling/support: [gameshotline.org](https://www.gameshotline.org)
- Depending on the severity and public nature of the incident, consider offering a communal prayer or gathering opportunity to help the community respond and heal through a Jewish framework.
- Be sure the education department in your synagogue has been briefed on the incident allowing training for teachers, and potentially sending letters to parents to help offer guidance.

Month of Incident:

- Read ADL's nationally representative surveys of harassment on [social media](#) and in [online games](#) to better understand how your experience fits into the experiences many people are having online.
- Hold a community conversation about people's experiences with online hate and harassment. Reach out to and join local groups representing a variety of communities impacted by these harms and invite staff at tech companies who work in your community (especially local offices of large tech companies such as Facebook and Google) to attend and listen.
- Consider writing letters of concern to your local or state/provincial elected officials to highlight legislation around holding perpetrators of online harassment accountable and giving targets of online harassment access to justice through [ADL's Backspace Hate campaign](#).

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OTHER COMMON SITUATIONS

Community members often turn to clergy when seeking assistance with antisemitic incidents that take place out in the community or with other related issues. The sections below provide useful information and framing that you may consider utilizing in these instances.

School-Based Incidents

We encourage clergy and Jewish educators to build relationships with local school administrators as soon as possible so you are among the first calls when an incident happens in a school. This relationship is mutually beneficial for you and the administration, as you may be provided with an insider's perspective on the response process and also be turned to for guidance and support.

Clergy and synagogue leadership hold a special place in these responses as key communicators and intermediaries between parents and the administration. You can call for a thorough investigation, communicate impact, calm the community and ensure that incidents are turned into teachable moments.

To familiarize yourself with what you can expect from a school in terms of incident response, we encourage you to review "[Responding to Bias Incidents in Middle and High Schools: Resources and Best Practices for School Administrators & Educators.](#)"

For Our Communities in the United States:

Religious Accommodations

Sometimes congregants reach out seeking guidance regarding religious accommodation issues. A religious accommodation is typically sought when a work or school obligation conflicts with an individual's religious observance. For example, a congregant's workplace may refuse to accommodate a request to swap shifts with a coworker in order to observe the High Holidays; a child's public school may refuse to allow her to take a standardized test on a day other than Saturday; or a township may hold an important election on Shabbat.

In the U.S. workplace in general, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII") prohibits employers, except religious organizations, from discriminating against individuals because of their religion in hiring, firing and other terms and conditions of employment. Title VII also requires employers to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee or prospective employee, unless doing so would create an undue hardship upon the employer. [Learn how to advocate for religious freedom in the workplace.](#)

Accommodating students and employees who seek to take time off for the High Holidays is not merely a principled and worthy practice; in many instances it may be legally required. The same is often true of public colleges and universities. However, to obtain a religious accommodation for the High Holidays from schools or employers, students and employees often have to fulfill certain obligations. Learn more about what to do for [elementary schools](#), [colleges and universities](#) and [workplaces](#) in each respective link.

First Amendment Issues

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

When written, the First Amendment was a radical and revolutionary departure from a world in which state-imposed religious persecution, censorship and oppression were commonplace. We should be proud to have the liberty to exercise these rights, which are not guaranteed in many other countries.

However, congregants may not be familiar with some of the challenges that come with this fundamental freedom.

Hate Speech

Though words can be incredibly harmful, the First Amendment provides broad protections, even for speech that is hateful. While there are some types of speech – obscenity, defamation, invasion of privacy, threats, harassment and incitement to violence – that are not protected by the First Amendment, these exceptions are quite limited.

Often, when community members claim they have experienced hate speech, they do so in search of legal recourse. In these situations, it is important to remember that hate crime laws do not punish speech or thought. Instead, hate crime laws are only applied in situations where an underlying crime has been committed, and the person or property is targeted because of a protected, immutable characteristic.

Even if the particular speech at issue is protected by the First Amendment, hateful speech always has impact on a community and should be vehemently denounced, particularly if it comes from elected officials, school administrators, or other influential members of the community. Sometimes the response can be countering the hateful messaging with positive speech. In other more egregious situations, you may consider mobilizing the community in calling for a public apology or even resignation.

["ADL's Hate Crime Laws: The ADL Approach"](#) explains hate crime laws in further detail.



The Firehouse Art Center installation in Norman, Oklahoma, defaced by anti-Semitic graffiti, - Posted By: Norman City Council Member Kate Bierman on Social Media

Teaching versus Celebrating Religious Holidays in Public Schools

Come winter, congregants may approach you with questions or concerns regarding how public schools acknowledge the various religious and secular holiday traditions celebrated during this time of year. Teachers, administrators and parents should try to promote greater understanding and tolerance among students of different traditions by taking care to adhere to the requirements of the First Amendment.

The First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion – including to young schoolchildren – by prohibiting the government from endorsing or promoting any particular religious point of view. This prohibition has led courts to ban such plainly coercive religious activities in public schools as organized prayer and the teaching of creationism. The law is less clear regarding the limits on holiday celebrations in public schools, but certain guidelines should be followed to ensure that public schools can best celebrate the religious freedom upon which this nation was founded.

Teachers must be careful not to cross the line between teaching about religious holidays (which is permitted) and celebrating religious holidays (which is not). Celebrating religious holidays in the form of religious worship or other practices is unconstitutional; teaching about a holiday is constitutional if it furthers a genuine secular program of education, is presented objectively and does not have the effect of advancing or inhibiting religion.

ADL's resource "[The December Dilemma: Teaching About Religious Holidays](#)" answers frequently asked questions on this subject and provides some case studies to consider.

Proselytizing

On its own, proselytizing does not necessarily constitute an antisemitic incident. Individuals who proselytize in person or via phone, if they do not appear threatening, may be politely turned away. Should the behavior escalate or turn aggressive, congregations should make a note of the person or persons and, if the behavior appears threatening, may consider reporting the matter to law enforcement.

Proselytizing by mail, such as the receipt of an unwanted book, should be handled similarly. Should the matter escalate, congregations may consider reporting it to law enforcement.

When in doubt, always report the incident to ADL.

United Against Antisemitism

Like all forms of hate, antisemitism will best be dismantled as a community. We thank you for doing your part to build communities of safety, equity and holiness for all. Please remember that you are not alone in this work. ADL and the URJ are here to support you.

DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ADL AND THE URJ

