

Expect Respect

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

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What is a hate crime?

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a hate crime is a “crime of violence, property damage, or threat that is motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias based on race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.”

Within the State of Michigan, a person is guilty of ethnic intimidation if that person maliciously threatens or physically contacts a person with intent to intimidate, harass or damage the property of that person because of his or her race, color, religion, gender or national origin.

The University of Michigan also recognizes additional categories of potential bias, such as sex, gender identity or expression and age.

What are some examples of hate crimes?

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Painting racial slurs on the side of a campus building, assaulting another person because of his or her perceived national origin, or throwing a rock through someone's window while yelling derogatory comments about his or her religion are hypothetical examples of a hate crime.

What is a bias-related incident?

Similar to hate crimes, bias incidents are non-criminal activities that harm another because of that person's membership in a classification, such as race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, age or religion.

What are some examples of bias-related incidents?

Depending on the totality of the circumstances, writing a racial epithet in erasable marker on someone's dry-erase board, making fun of another person because of his or her language or accent, or making insulting comments about someone's traditional manner of dress or geographic origin are hypothetical examples of a bias-related incident.

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How can I report a hate crime or bias-related incident?

If it is an emergency, dial 9-1-1 to be connected to the Department of Public Safety (on campus) or Ann Arbor Police Department (off campus).

If you believe you have experienced a hate crime, you may report it directly to the Department of Public Safety (on-campus) at 734-763-1131 or the Ann Arbor Police (off-campus) by at 734-994-2911. Even if you report it to DPS or AAPD, we would appreciate a report to the University's bias incident reporting system for statistical and follow-up purposes.

If you are not sure you have experienced a hate crime and would like to discuss the incident, please call 734-615-BIAS (2427). Faculty and staff who call the number during normal business hours will be connected to the Office of Institutional Equity; students to the Dean of Students Office. Staff from these offices will offer support and begin to discuss next steps with callers. Those who call the phone line after normal business hours should leave a message and a staff member will get back with them on the next business day.

The University is committed to providing a number of safe spaces where community members may confidentially report bias-related incidents. [See the REPORTING section of the website](#) for an additional list of offices where you may report such incidents.

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What benefits does the University get from having a diverse community?

At the University of Michigan, we live, work and learn in a culture that defines itself in terms of intellectual exchange, appreciation of individual differences, and respect for each individual's personal dignity. The University's diverse blend of students, staff and faculty is a tremendous resource, and we all benefit from this mix of perspectives and experiences. For many students, college is the first opportunity to meet and interact with those from other races, cultures and backgrounds. It is through this rich learning environment that we teach future generations the importance of understanding and valuing every individual's opinions and experiences.

Why are bias-related incidents of concern?

While the University is committed to a respectful and inclusive learning and work environment, it can only fulfill that commitment through the actions of individual

members of the University community. We are each responsible for treating every fellow member of our community with dignity and respect. If one member of our community engages in harassment or discrimination, the person subject to that behavior will not feel respected, genuinely valued or that s/he is an equal member of the University community. That person may stop contributing his/her unique perspective in the learning, research or work environment, or may lose his/her commitment to the community and leave. When one person engages in acts of bias, many of us suffer the effects.

How will the University respond when it learns of hate crimes or bias-related incidents?

The University is committed to act responsibly when it learns of incidents motivated by hate or bias. Such occurrences, if they constitute a criminal act such as assault or property damage, should be reported to the police and will be fully investigated. Other acts of intolerance may violate University policies or community standards. In those instances we will pursue a range of remedies that may include disciplinary action as well as community education and dialogue.

When you report a bias incident, University staff will help you determine the possible next steps, explain the relevant processes, and offer counseling and support or refer you to other offices that may provide support.

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What resources exist for supporting community members who have been the target of hate crimes and incidents?

Individuals who experience acts of hate, harassment or discrimination should feel they have a safe space in which to report the behavior and receive support. The University is committed to provide such safe spaces and to support a comprehensive reporting mechanism for incidents of bias so that we may better understand our campus climate and work continuously to improve it. Follow this link for a list of resources and offices that exist to support students, staff and faculty.

How often do hate crimes and bias-related incidents occur at U-M?

Hate crimes are reported annually in the Campus Safety Handbook. In 2004 (the most recent year for which we have reported statistics), the Ann Arbor campus had one assault with race prejudice reported to the Department of Public Safety, and 11 bias-related incidents (occurring on campus or in Ann Arbor) reported to the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Affairs. However, in the past, the University has not had a comprehensive mechanism for reporting bias-related incidents that do not constitute crimes. Our new reporting process is intended to encourage more complete reporting, and will allow us to better track the frequency of such incidents in the future.

What are the U-M policies that address hate crimes and bias-related incidents?

Policies that address these issues can be found on the [What Kinds of Matters Should Be Reported?](#) page of this website.

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What types of personal characteristics are protected from discrimination in the University's official policies?

Members of the University community are protected from unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, age or religion. The University also complies with all applicable laws regarding nondiscrimination.

What is the difference between discrimination and bias-related incidents?

Unlawful discrimination refers to specific conduct prohibited by law that unfairly treats people differently because of their characteristic or perceived characteristics that the law deems to be unrelated to merit. An example of unlawful discrimination would be to deny membership into a group because a person is Muslim.

Bias is a preconceived negative opinion or attitude about a group of people who possess common physical characteristic or cultural experiences. An example of a bias incident, would be writing racist or homophobic graffiti on the door of a student's room.

Unlawful discrimination often results from bias. Bias-related incidents, however, do not always result in unfair treatment that violates nondiscrimination laws.

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Can individuals who engage in hateful speech be arrested or disciplined by the University?

It depends. The University takes seriously its responsibility to appropriately balance its core values of protecting individual freedoms (e.g., freedom of speech, artistic expression, freedom of association, academic freedom) and ensuring equal and fair treatment of all. These values may sometimes be in conflict. Various University offices are responsible for determining whether hateful speech violates the University's non-discrimination and unlawful harassment policies. In so doing, the University is always mindful that academia is a unique place where the exchange of ideas, robust debate and artistic expression are critical to the University's teaching and research missions.



How can I arrange an educational program on this topic for my campus department or student organization?

Several University offices offer education or assistance in developing educational programs. You can find out more about these programs in the [How to Get Involved section](#) of this website

We also encourage campus organizations that are planning programs and events related to creating a respectful and welcoming community to let us know about your event, so we may consider it for inclusion in this website. You can send information about upcoming events to respect@umich.edu.

Where can I find a list of related definitions?

If you are unsure of any of the terms used please view our [definitions](#) page.

Report a bias incident by phone  734-615-BIAS,  In person, or  online

Office of Institutional Equity | Student life | Dean of Students
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