



The Community Relations Service and the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act

The Community Relations Service (CRS) is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, the Federal government's "Peacemaker" for community conflicts and tensions arising from differences of race, color, and national origin. Created by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, CRS is the only Federal component dedicated to assist State and local units of government, private and public organizations, and community groups with preventing and resolving racial and ethnic tensions, conflicts, and civil disorders.

"What Can CRS Do to Prevent and Respond to Alleged Violent Hate Crimes?"

With passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, CRS is authorized to work with communities to employ strategies to prevent and respond to alleged violent hate crimes committed on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or disability in addition to continuing to employ strategies to prevent and respond to community tension relating to alleged discrimination and violent hate crimes on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, or national origin.

EDUCATE – COMMUNICATE – CONCILIATE – MEDIATE – FACILITATE

- CRS assists willing parties and explores opportunities to develop and implement local strategies that can help law enforcement, local officials, civil rights organizations, and interested community groups respond to alleged hate crimes and find ways to prevent future incidents.
- State and local law enforcement officials and community leaders may contact CRS to request assistance in improving communication between law enforcement and community members in the aftermath of a hate crime. CRS may help facilitate dialogues between law enforcement and community members to increase mutual understanding about the investigative and prosecutorial process as well as the concerns of people in the community.
- CRS improves community response mechanisms, by facilitating the development of community capacity to help prevent hate crimes with services and programs that include: *conciliation, mediation, training, technical assistance, and other tension reduction techniques.*
- CRS may introduce the community to representatives of agencies that respond to hate crimes, including federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, local government resources as well as community organizations (*advocacy organizations, and other service organizations*).
- CRS also responds to requests for assistance from law enforcement and community organizations for contingency planning and self-marshalling training before large protests or events to help keep events safe. We facilitate meetings between all parties involved, and serve as a neutral entity to ensure logistics are coordinated and that information is shared appropriately.