

# INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

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SECTION I.

# INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

## OVERVIEW

*Program Activity Guide: Helping Youth Resist Bias and Hate*, 2nd edition provides parents, educators, and other adults working with middle school aged children with tools and strategies to engage in constructive discussions and activities about the causes and effects of prejudice and bias-motivated behavior and to intervene, when needed, with youth who engage in such behavior.

This resource is a key component of Partners Against Hate, a comprehensive program of outreach, education, and training to address youth-initiated hate violence. *Program Activity Guide*, 2nd edition meets two of the primary goals of Partners Against Hate:

- To increase awareness of the problem of bias crime, and
- To share information about promising education and counteraction strategies for the wide range of community-based professionals who work and interact with children of all ages.

## UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY

This resource is grounded in the philosophy that stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, bias, and hate are part of a broad continuum of behavior. Along that continuum are a number of negative behaviors, including bullying, threats, exclusion, harassment, bias-motivated behavior, and hate-motivated violence.

Inherent in this philosophy is the belief that to successfully interrupt this continuum, children, at as young an age as possible, must have opportunities to practice prosocial attitudes and behaviors, learn about themselves and others, and develop nonviolent responses to conflict. Research data supports that young children begin to notice and evaluate differences very early in their development. Research also supports that societal stereotyping and bias influence children's self-concepts and attitudes toward others. Opportunities for children to engage in creative self-reflection and to explore the diversity around them in open, honest, and creative ways, while learning about the causes and effects of prejudice and bias, can help them begin a lifelong journey toward fairness and nonviolence.

The work begun in early childhood must continue into adolescence. During this period, marked by increased risk-taking, peer pressure, and a general struggle with

### !!! NOTE

Throughout this resource the terms "hate-motivated violence" and "bias-motivated violence" are used interchangeably.

Also used interchangeably are the terms "hate-motivated behavior" and "bias-motivated behavior."

their sense of identity, youth look to their parents and other important adults in their lives for advice, modeling, clearly articulated limits, and opportunities to try out new responses to controversial issues. In particular, youth look to adults for guidance on ways to assess positive and negative behaviors and how to anticipate the consequences of their choices. They also look to adults for help on how to develop strategies for diverting their energy into healthy activities. These needs are often masked in complaints that their parents and other adults interfere with their independence, making it difficult for parents, teachers, counselors, and other significant adults to know how much to say or do. At a minimum, however, it is critical that the conversations begun in early childhood about topics such as diversity, fairness, prejudice, and bias continue into adolescence. Developmentally, middle school youth are able to recognize discrimination and unfairness in themselves and others. With careful guidance, they can learn positive alternatives to such behaviors.

When a young person's prejudice moves into the realm of antisocial behavior and/or when actual hate behavior manifests itself, parents, educators, and other adults must question whether they missed an important teachable moment in that young person's life. Recognizing such moments and capitalizing on them can contribute greatly to a child's overall positive social development and ultimately, to the betterment of the community and society at large. Failing to recognize these important moments in a child's development has the possibility of exacerbating the pain that he or she may be experiencing or it could contribute directly to his or her future violent or antisocial behavior.

The approach taken in this resource is proactive in that it offers individuals who have the most significant and direct contact with youth – parents and educators – tools and strategies to help them learn about diversity and to develop skills to resist prejudice and hate-motivated violence. It also supplies adults with the necessary background information to approach these topics with accurate information and increased confidence. In addition, this resource provides information on ways to effectively intervene when bias-motivated behaviors do occur. This comprehensive approach will help parents, educators, and other adults working with youth create and sustain cohesive environments where positive, nonviolent, and equitable relationships are valued.

## AUDIENCE

*Program Activity Guide: Helping Youth Resist Bias and Hate*, 2nd edition has been designed primarily for parents and educators of middle school youth; however, much of the material will also be relevant for youth service professionals, counselors, law enforcement officials, and other adults in the community who work and interact with preteens and adolescents. Subsequent editions of the *Program Activity Guide* will include information and activities for older teens and young college age adults. An earlier edition of this resource specifically addressed the needs of elementary school age children.

## CONTENTS

In addition to this Introduction, the *Program Activity Guide*, 2nd edition includes the following sections:

- ***Background Information*** – this section includes an introduction to hate crimes and bias incidents, information about hate on the Internet, findings on school violence, and an overview of bullying in schools. Also included in this section are frequently asked questions about hate crimes and hate on the Internet.
- ***Interacting with Children and Youth on Issues of Diversity and Bias*** – this section includes information on how children ages 2-12 develop racial and cultural identity and attitudes, the role of parents and educators in helping children and youth resist prejudice and hate-motivated violence, ways to create environments that promote diversity, and ways that the media influences young minds. Frequently asked questions by parents and educators on the topics addressed throughout this resource are also included.
- ***Proactive Tools and Strategies To Help Youth Resist Prejudice and Hate*** – included in this section are recommended practices, approaches, and programs to employ in a variety of settings.
- ***Guidelines for Intervention and Outreach*** – this section includes frequently asked questions by teachers and administrators about how to respond effectively to bias incidents, bullying, vandalism, and hate crimes when they occur. Also included are tips for working effectively with parents, law enforcement, and other members of the community following such incidents.
- ***Bibliographies*** – included in this section are recommended resources grouped as follows: “Resources for Personal and Professional Development,” “Resources for Educators and Youth Service Professionals,” “Resources for Parents and Families,” and “Recommended Titles for Middle School Youth.” These resources have been carefully selected to help adults continue their own education on issues of diversity, prejudice, and hate-motivated violence and to help them select additional age-appropriate resources to use with their students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively deliver the programs and materials outlined in this resource, it is important that adults take time to consider their own thinking on the included topics. At a minimum, parents, teachers, and other adults working with youth on issues of diversity and bias must consider how their own prejudices have developed and how those prejudices affect their attitudes and behavior toward others. Adults who honestly examine their own biases and work to overcome them are less likely to pass those biases on to the young people with whom they interact. While examining one’s own thoughts and feelings about prejudice and bias can be challenging, and occasionally daunting, it is also a critical step in being able to model lifelong learning.

Adults who are working with youth on issues like the ones addressed in the *Partners Against Hate Program Activity Guide*, 2nd edition are also urged to consider

the following recommendations:

- Avoid “preaching” to youth about how they should behave. Research indicates that exhortation is the least effective methodology for changing prejudiced attitudes. Provide opportunities for young people to resolve conflicts, solve problems in a productive manner, work in diverse teams, and think critically about information.
- Integrate culturally diverse information and perspectives into all aspects of your curriculum or programming. Move beyond “one-shot” cultural history months, and infuse a multicultural approach into all aspects of students’ education.
- Keep abreast of current issues and discuss them openly and frequently with youth. Let them know that you consider yourself a learner, and that you see yourself as part of the learning process.
- Review the materials that are part of the daily environment, including bulletin boards, books, videos, music, and displays, to ensure that they are inclusive of all people and do not reinforce stereotypes.
- Model nonviolent responses to conflict, clear communication, empathy, and thoughtful, fair decisions when interacting with children of all ages. Seeing these behaviors on a consistent basis will send strong messages about fairness and will help youth internalize a sense of cooperation and community.
- Establish an environment that allows for mistakes. Since most of us have been unconsciously acculturated into prejudicial and stereotypical thinking, we may not be aware that certain attitudes are unfair or harmful. Acknowledge that intolerant thinking will surface from time to time in ourselves and others. Model nondefensive responses when told that something you said or did was insensitive or offensive.
- Allow time for a process to develop. Introduce less complex issues first, and create time to establish trust before moving on to more sensitive and complicated topics.
- Be prepared to respond to purposefully directed acts of bias. Young people will carefully observe how you intervene when someone is the target of discriminatory or hate-based behavior. Silence in the face of injustice conveys the impression that the prejudiced behavior is condoned or not worthy of attention.
- Involve parents, other family members, educators, youth service professionals,

and other members of the community in the learning process. Acknowledge that the school, home, and community are interconnected and that all adults must work together to help children and adolescents develop and sustain positive and healthy attitudes and behavior.

**“Recommendations” adapted from the *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE*® Institute Anti-Bias Study Guide (Elementary/Intermediate Level). © 2001. New York, NY: Anti-Defamation League. All rights reserved.**