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Responses to Bias-Based Incidents

We have put this information together as a starting place to help you understand some of the responses a victim or a family member might experience when dealing with an incident based on bias whether or not it is designated as a hate crime. Due to the nature of this kind of incident, whole communities may also experience some of these reactions because they have been indirectly targeted as well.

Victim Reactions to Hate Crimes

from *Hate Crimes: Victim Survivors* National Center for Victims of Crime <http://www.ncvc.org/>

- The responses of individual victims vary
- Victim reactions are likely to be influenced by a variety of factors including the nature and duration of the crime, the victim's age, prior history of victimization, personal resilience, family and social environment, access to support networks (including victim services), the response of law enforcement, and many others.
- Responses of victims are similar to those of victims of any crime, and include:
 - Fear - for themselves, their families, their communities, their livelihoods, their way of life
 - Suspicion - for example, of phone calls, strangers at the door
 - Sadness
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Anger
 - Alienation
 - Feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability
 - Loss of trust
 - Feelings of betrayal and injustice
 - Loss of confidence in law enforcement/whole criminal justice system
 - Fear that the criminal justice system is also biased against the group the victim belongs to
 - Changes of life-style - limiting their activities and where they go, staying at home as much as possible, not going out alone, not letting children go out alone
 - Feelings of stress
 - Self-blame
 - Self-hatred

What is the emotional damage?

from *Hate Crimes Today: An Age-Old Foe In Modern Dress*

Position paper released in 1998 by the American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/hate/>

Intense feelings of vulnerability, anger, and depression, physical ailments and learning problems, and difficult interpersonal relations-all symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder-can be brought on by a hate crime.

Dr. Herek and his colleagues found that some hate crime victims have needed as much as 5 years to overcome their ordeal. By contrast, victims of nonbias crimes experienced a decrease in crime-related psychological problems within 2 years of the crime. Like other victims of posttraumatic stress, hate crime victims may heal more quickly when appropriate support and resources are made available soon after the incident occurs.

Dr. Gregory M. Herek, a psychologist at the University of California
<http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/bio.html>

Secondary Injury Is The Victim's Perceived Rejection By And Lack Of Expected Support From The Community

from: *Responding to Hate Crime: A Multidisciplinary Curriculum for Law Enforcement and Victim Assistance Professionals*
by National Center for Hate Crime Prevention: <http://www.hhd.org> now online at: <http://edc.org/HHD/hatecrime/LAWENFO.TXT>

- Victim trauma may be exacerbated by the insensitivity of others. This is known as "secondary injury."
- Most crime victims experience some type of secondary injury as they attempt to deal with the systems that provide physical or mental health care, process insurance claims to recover losses, or adjudicate offenders.
- Bias crime victims may experience more severe secondary injury because professionals who work within the system that serves the victim tend to have the same prejudices and biases as the rest of society.
- As a result of personal bias and prejudice, professionals—like other individuals—may minimize the impact of the crime on the individual.
- Bias crime victims frequently feel betrayed and hopeless when they confront institutional prejudice.
- Secondary injury can also occur as victims of bias crime interact with family, friends, and acquaintances, as well as the clergy, the media, and others.