



An Anti-Bias Vision For The Next Generation

In 2019, more than half of known bias offenders in New Jersey were age 25 or younger. 994 bias incidents were reported to NJ law enforcement in 2019—the largest number since the State began reporting this data more than 25 years ago. Bias not only impacts the victim’s physical, emotional, and mental health, but that of the entire community. The recommendations in New Jersey’s Interagency Task Force to Combat Youth Bias [report](#) focus on the future of New Jersey’s young people and outline how we can work towards a more equitable and just state.

Root Causes of Youth Bias

One of the key conclusions of the Report is that children do not simply wake up one day and decide to commit a hate crime. Instead, children begin to recognize and unconsciously internalize bias and racism at a very young age, even when the adults in their lives are not deliberately sharing biased views with them. Children learn bias at home, in school, in their communities, and, increasingly, on social media. In school, for example, children take note of whose stories and histories are taught and valued in the curriculum (and whose are not), whose misbehavior is excused (and whose is policed), and whose academic achievement is supported and expected (and whose is not). Whether children act on learned biases ultimately comes down to whether they view it as socially acceptable to do so. When our communities’ remain silent in the face of stereotypes, hate, and clear systemic disparities in our schools and communities, they allow bias and hate to spread unchecked. As noted in the report, “Our community’s words and actions speak volumes to our children, but our silence and inaction sometimes speak louder.” In addition, as social media has amplified racism, extremism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and white nationalism, and as political rhetoric has become more divisive and even dehumanizing, the number of bias incidents in New Jersey has risen steeply.

Where Our New Jersey Community Is Today and Where We Go From Here

New Jersey has a number of laws and regulations meant to address discrimination and bias, and its state agencies have a number of programs and strategies meant to do the same. But the Task Force received near unanimous feedback that the State’s existing efforts have not been sufficient to comprehensively prevent or address systemic racism, institutional bias, and interpersonal bias. Many of New Jersey’s local communities and non-profit organizations have tried to fill that gap, and their work provides valuable lessons. But unlike state action, uncoordinated local efforts cannot reach all our state’s young people. It is also clear from community feedback that it is impossible to address interpersonal bias without addressing systemic bias and systemic racism. Indeed, part of how we got here is by failing to address the ways in which many of the institutions that shape our country have a long legacy of excluding, oppressing, and degrading people of color, religious minorities, immigrants, women, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities.

Recommendations

The following Task Force recommendations therefore outline a bold vision to guide New Jersey’s young people, unapologetically, down a new path, one where all of New Jersey’s communities are seen, reflected, and valued. To see this vision become a reality, we must educate our entire community to recognize and challenge implicit,

explicit, and systemic biases, we must begin dismantling the biases imbedded in our State's institutions, and we must protect New Jersey's historically-marginalized residents. The Report outlines 27 recommendations in three categories (education, enforcement, and public engagement), but the first two are, by far, the most critical.

1. Require comprehensive anti-bias education for students in public schools throughout the state, and develop curricula support materials through DOE; and
2. Require anti-bias training for all teachers and school employees, including training on implicit bias, institutional bias, and structural bias.

Additional Education Recommendations

3. Address discrimination in the imposition of school discipline.
4. Reconvene the Education-Law Working Group to study potential amendments to New Jersey's Uniform Memorandum of Agreement to reduce disparities in criminal justice referrals and take meaningful steps to close the school-to-prison pipeline.
5. Address racial disparities in identification of academically advanced students and identification and placement of students with disabilities.
6. Take meaningful measures to diversify educator hiring at the K-12 and postsecondary levels by reforming certification processes and New Jersey's teacher pipeline.
7. Require anti-bias training for student athletes.
8. Fund programs for student-led anti-bias programming and coordinate best practices.
9. Encourage all K-12 school districts to designate a Chief Equity Officer.
10. Require anti-bias policies in all colleges and universities.
11. Encourage public and private postsecondary institutions designate a Chief Equity Officer.
12. Ensure that juveniles in state custody receive anti-bias programming as well.
13. Publish resources for schools, colleges, and universities on whole-school responses to bias incidents.

Enforcement of Criminal and Civil Laws

14. Improve specificity of bias incident data collection and publicly release data more frequently.
15. Make it easier for residents to report bias incidents to the Attorney General's Office for civil or criminal investigation.
16. Continue aggressive criminal and civil enforcement of New Jersey's bias laws.
17. Strengthen the State's hate crime law.
18. Strengthen the civil and criminal remedies available to victims of bias-motivated conduct.
19. Hold accountable those who weaponize the Internet to harm others by addressing doxing and swatting.
20. Mandate completion of anti-bias education program for juvenile bias crime offenders.
21. Expand law enforcement training on cyberhate investigations and domestic extremism.
22. Consider investigations related to social media platforms.
23. Study potential amendments to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act.

Public Engagement

24. Call out public figures who use hateful rhetoric.
25. Launch a statewide campaign to stand up to hate in New Jersey.
26. Establish an Incident Response Team within the Division on Civil Rights.
27. Create resource guides to educate parents and educators about how to talk to children about avoiding hate on the Internet and how to recognize signs of radicalization.

**DCR welcomes your feedback and hopes you will join us
in pursuing this new vision for New Jersey's next generation!**

Ways to contact DCR: Phone: 1-833-NJDCR4U (711 relay)
Online: [NJCivilRights.gov](https://njjcivilrights.gov) and <https://bias.njjcivilrights.gov> to file a complaint
Email: CommunityRelations@NJCivilRights.gov
Social Media: Facebook and Twitter @CivilRightsNJ
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