

## Hate Crimes

### 320.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide members of this office with guidelines for identifying and investigating incidents and crimes that may be motivated by hatred or other bias.

#### 320.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Hate crime** - A crime motivated by prejudice based on actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability of the victim. This includes homelessness (Md. Code CR § 10-304).

### 320.2 POLICY

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office recognizes and places a high priority on the rights of all individuals guaranteed under the state and federal constitutions and incorporated in state and federal law.

### 320.3 PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

While it is recognized that not all crime can be prevented, this office is committed to taking a proactive approach to preventing and preparing for likely hate crimes by:

- (a) Making an affirmative effort to establish contact with persons and groups within the community who are likely targets of hate crimes, and forming networks that address prevention and response.
- (b) Providing victim assistance, community follow-up or identifying available resources.
- (c) Educating community and civic groups about hate crime laws.

### 320.4 INVESTIGATIONS

Whenever any member of this office receives a report of a suspected hate crime or other activity that reasonably appears to involve a potential hate crime, the following should occur:

- (a) Assigned deputies should promptly contact the victim, witness or reporting party to investigate the matter further, as circumstances may dictate.
- (b) A supervisor should be notified of the circumstances as soon as practicable.
- (c) Once the in-progress aspect of any such situation has been stabilized (e.g., treatment of victims or arrest of suspects at the scene), the assigned deputies should take reasonable steps to preserve evidence that establishes a possible hate crime.
- (d) Based upon available information, deputies should take appropriate action to mitigate further injury or damage to potential victims or the community.
- (e) Depending on the situation, the assigned deputies or supervisor may request assistance from investigators or other resources.

# St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office

LE Policy Manual

## *Hate Crimes*

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- (f) The assigned deputies should interview available witnesses, victims and others to determine what circumstances, if any, indicate that the situation may involve a hate crime.
- (g) The assigned deputies should make reasonable efforts to assist the victim by providing available information on local assistance programs and organizations as required by the Victim and Witness Assistance Policy. [VICTIM AND WITNESS INFORMATION](#)
- (h) The assigned deputies should include all available evidence indicating the likelihood of a hate crime in the relevant reports.
- (i) The assigned deputies and supervisor should take reasonable steps to ensure that any such situation does not escalate further and should provide information to the victim regarding peace and/or protective orders. Refer to the Victim and Witness Assistance Policy. [VICTIM AND WITNESS INFORMATION](#)

### 320.4.1 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

If a hate crime case is assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division, the assigned investigator will be responsible for:

- (a) Coordinating further investigation with the State's Attorney's Office and other appropriate law enforcement agencies.
- (b) Maintaining contact with the victim and other involved individuals, as needed.
- (c) Maintaining statistical data and tracking of suspected hate crimes, as indicated or required by state law.

### 320.5 TRAINING

All members of this office should receive training on hate crime recognition and investigation in accordance with the training policy.