

Combating Discrimination

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Equality is a birthright in the United States, protected by the Constitution, supported by civil rights laws and embraced by citizens. Yet, not a day passes without reports of unequal treatment of people on the basis of skin color, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, country of origin, ability and other differences.

What you can do

The Massachusetts Governor's Task Force on Hate Crimes offers the following advice to Arab-Americans, Muslims, South Asians and members of other ethnic groups who fear they may be victims of discrimination or hate crimes:

- Continue daily routines as much as normal.
- If you feel you need to, do things that make you feel safer, such as changing your routes and traveling in numbers.
- Remember that citizens and residents of the United States have a right to exercise their faith, live according to their cultural traditions and wear religiously distinctive clothing.
- Become an educator about your religion and culture to local schools, community groups and colleges.

Suggestions for parents

- Check your child's school policies on harassment and bullying.
- Ask your school to explain its response plan for racially motivated bullying or harassment.
- Join or help found a parents' task force on school safety.
- With smaller children, explain the concepts of bullying and teasing.
- Be honest and answer all of your teenager/child's questions.
- Warn children of potential harassment.
- Develop an action plan to get your child to school safely if attacked, and encourage your child to report any incident to a teacher, administrator or safety officer.

Resources

If you feel you are being discriminated against, here are some organizations that may be of assistance:

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
www.adc.org

Contains an incident report/discrimination claim form.

Arab American Institute

www.aaiusa.org

Teaching Tolerance

www.tolerance.org

The Community Relations Service

www.justice.gov/crs/

The Community Relations Service, an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, is a specialized federal conciliation service available to state and local officials to help resolve and prevent racial and ethnic conflict, violence and civil disorders.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

www.usccr.gov

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights investigates discrimination complaints.

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