Task Force on Hate Crime Outreach and Response  
Best Practice Recommendations for Law Enforcement Agencies

Background
On November 13, 2015, the world was shocked when 130 people were killed and 368 injured in 6 different attacks in Paris, for which ISIS claimed responsibility. Not long after, on December 2, 2015, in the nearby city of San Bernardino, 14 people were shot to death, and 22 others were hurt by a couple that were inspired by foreign terrorist groups in what was called the biggest terror attack in our nation since September 11.

On December 15, 2015, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a motion requesting that the District Attorney’s Office, Sheriff’s Department (LASD), Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC), and Commission on Human Relations (LACCHR) increase their outreach to the Muslim, Sikh, South Asian and other groups most often targeted for hate crime following acts of terror or other major incidents, and work to deter and swiftly respond to threats and acts of hate.

The Board action was timely. In Los Angeles County and throughout the nation, the number of Americans who were targeted for anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern hate crimes rose sharply following the attacks in San Bernardino and Paris. Analysis of the hate crime reports in our county by LACCHR showed a sharp rise in attacks against Muslims, Arab Americans, and people perceived to be Muslim during November and December 2015. As reported by the New York Times, other jurisdictions experienced the same: “Hate crimes against Muslim Americans and mosques across the United States have tripled in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, Calif., with dozens occurring within just a month, according to new data.”

In response, LACCHR collaborated with community partners in three major events which drew hundreds of attendees and featured Muslim, Sikh, South Asian, Jewish and interfaith leaders. The Commission also gathered and analyzed anti-Muslim/Middle Easterner hate crime data in the county to assess the increase in hate violence, and worked with Los Angeles Unified School District and the state department of Fair Employment and Housing to take pro-active steps to reduce Islamophobic bullying and discrimination. The LASD increased outreach to mosques, Sikh temples, and other community organizations. LASD also reported briefings at various stations to ensure deputies were aware of possible targeted locations, increased patrols at mosques, temples and synagogues, and participation in a public forum at the Islamic Center of Los Angeles.

To support this process, CCJCC established a Task Force on Hate Crimes Outreach and Response in January 2016 to promote inter-agency coordination and sharing of best practices to reduce hate crimes. Specifically, the task force was created to:

- promote coordinated swift responses to San Bernardino-type incidents that could occur;
- prevent an outbreak of hate crimes in the immediate aftermath of such incidents; and
• share best practices among law enforcement and government agencies that strengthen outreach efforts and other actions that can be effective in deterring threats and acts of bias-motivated violence.

Chaired by LACCHR Executive Director Robin Toma and LASD Captain Bobby Wyche, the task force included representatives from the following agencies

• District Attorney’s Office
• Los Angeles Police Department
• Long Beach Police Department
• Los Angeles Unified School Police Department
• U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service
• Los Angeles Unified School District – Office of Human Relations, Diversity, and Equity
• Muslim Public Affairs Council
• Council on American Islamic Relations
• California Sikh Council
• South Asian Network
• Anti-Defamation League
• Los Angeles LGBT Center
• California Conference for Equality and Justice
• Hate Violence Prevention Partnership

These agencies are pleased to present this Task Force report summary, which includes recommended strategies for building community connections and trust, planning for incidents, and responding effectively to acts of hate. In the immediate aftermath of a major incident like the San Bernardino attack or 9/11, Americans whose appearance is seen as similar to those who are identified as carrying out horrific attacks, are not only dealing with the trauma that everyone feels when shocked by the violent and sudden loss of life of many people. They also must face the anxiety and fear of becoming a victim of a wave of suspicion, fear, anger, aggression, and hate violence in an environment of anti-Muslim/Middle Easterner prejudice.

It is the Task Force’s hope that this report summary can serve as a resource to public safety agencies and others as they plan responses to address this issue and help protect vulnerable community members.

Cultivating Community Connections and Trust
Law enforcement agencies and others can help prevent hate crimes by cultivating connections with the community and building mutual trust. Strategies that can assist in this regard include:

• providing culturally competent training, including histories of the communities served, the role of historical prejudices, impacts of implicit biases and de-biasing techniques;
• adopting clear policies and protocols for taking reports on hate crimes and incidents, and investigating hate crimes;
• adopting policies that support and protect vulnerable victims, witnesses, and community members, regardless of immigration status;
• establishing a process for receiving community inquiries on hate crimes;
• cultivating a reliable and regularly updated network of leaders from affected communities before a crisis through in-person meetings and regular contacts; and
• proactively disseminating valuable information to vulnerable communities, such as information on protecting religious and community organizations, and supporting potentially targeted students in school.

Strategies such as these can be invaluable for building trust and demonstrating an agency’s commitment to protecting targeted communities.

Advance Planning and Training
As with all responses to crisis situations, advance preparation and appropriate and ongoing training is critical. Strategies that can help in this regard include:

• developing and regularly updating an outreach plan with the established network of community leaders;
• identifying potential hate crime targets with information from community leaders, available hate crime data, and information from the Human Relations Commission;
• establishing a plan with annual input from community leaders for responding to anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern/Arab hate crimes, including policing strategies that can protect against and deter hate crime and other extremist activity;
• establishing protocols with other law enforcement and government agencies for sharing information on hate crime activity; and
• conducting regular reviews of and trainings on the response plan, and seeking input from community leaders and other policing agencies.

Rapid and Effective Responses
By cultivating community relationships and developing a response plan, departments will be well positioned to respond swiftly to reactive hate activity that has been experienced in recent years. The following key strategies can reinforce the rapid and effective response needed at that critical time:

• Law enforcement leaders should immediately connect with potentially targeted communities and the established network of leaders to re-assure them of support and open the lines of communication.
• Press conferences and/or other means of mass messaging with police, elected leaders, and affected communities should be utilized to counter scapegoating of entire groups and to re-affirm support for the community
• Mutual assistance agreements among law enforcement agencies should be invoked to share information on hate activity and assist on investigations

Conclusion
The Task Force submits this document with the hope that the strategies, policies and best practices outlined will continue to be developed, adopted and implemented. The Task Force hopes this guide serves as a resource that helps to protect the basic human rights to the safety and dignity of those who are most vulnerable to hate and prejudice in times of crisis and fear.