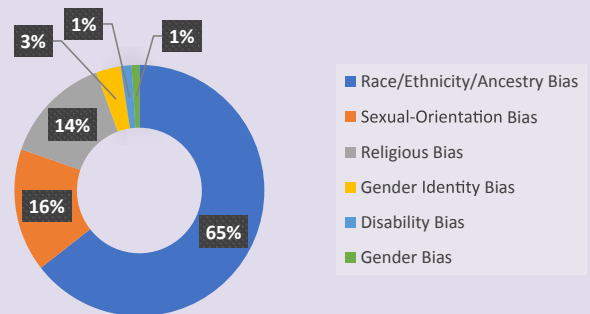


## CONSIDERATIONS IN OPERATING HATE CRIME HOTLINES

According to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#), the number of hate crime incidents recorded by law enforcement in the U.S. increased by 10% from 2010 (6,628 incidents) to 2019 (7,314 incidents) even as the total volume of crime decreased 22% over the same period. Among the 7,314 hate crime incidents recorded by law enforcement in 2019, 8,812 victims were the targets of those incidents. The most recent data from the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) shows that, in 2021<sup>1</sup>, there were 10,840 hate crime incidents involving 12,411 victims. More than half (65%) of those incidents were motivated by bias against the victim's race, ethnicity, or ancestry. See Figure 1.

Researchers agree hate crimes in the U.S. are likely undercounted for a number of reasons, including victims' fear of coming forward; difficulty determining the perpetrator's motivation; definitional issues that determine how law enforcement classify incidents; limitations in the legacy Unified Crime Reports' capturing of hate crimes; and law enforcement agencies' ability to report incidents through the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey suggest that 40 to 50 percent of all hate crimes go unreported to law enforcement. Hate Crime Hotlines can play a valuable role in connecting victims with services, collecting information on community incidents, and facilitating reporting to law enforcement.

Figure 1. Percent Distribution of Victims of Hate Crime Incidents by Bias Type, 2021



Source: Hate Crime Statistics, 2021, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-supplemental-2021-hate-crime-statistics>

An effective community response to hate crime requires a collaborative approach. Entities designing a Hate Crime Hotline should endeavor to:

1. Connect with other hotlines to learn how they work.
2. Collaborate with stakeholders including victim service providers, survivors, persons with lived experiences, community-based organizations, culturally specific organizations, faith-based organizations, and other allies to complete a community resource map to identify the needs of the community and the resources available to address those needs through a hate crime reporting hotline.
3. Develop policies to govern the operation of the hotline, including policies that address: the privacy and

*Keeping victims and communities safe is paramount in addressing hate crimes. Lessons learned from domestic violence hotlines can inform how Hate Crime Hotlines can best protect victim privacy and confidentiality.*

confidentiality of hotline callers; referrals to trauma-informed victim services; law enforcement reporting procedures; staff training; and accommodations for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency.

4. Develop an outreach/marketing plan to raise awareness of the hotline, particularly to communities and individuals most likely to be targeted by hate crimes.

Not all Hate Crime Hotlines look alike. OVC held a [webinar](#) that highlighted different hotline models, including state-run hate crime hotlines operating as adjuncts of other crime hotlines; answering services through which local law enforcement respond to callers' messages and reports; and nonprofit-operated hotlines addressing crimes targeting particular ethnic/language groups.

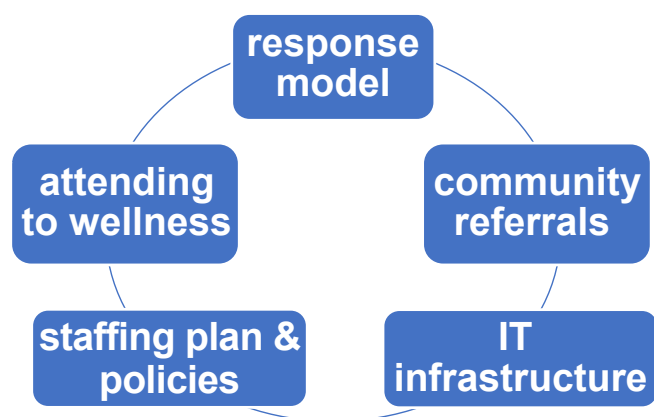
<sup>1</sup> For the 2021 data year, the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program accepted Summary Reporting System (SRS) hate crime data submissions and additional National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) hate crime reports from 3,025 agencies that covered a combined population of 87,239,467 to help compile this special report. The supplemental data was combined with that submitted via NIBRS, which has been converted to the SRS format. This supplement allows for a more complete representation of reported hate crimes in the US for 2021.



# CONSIDERATIONS IN OPERATING HATE CRIME HOTLINES

5. Develop a language access plan to include interpretive services available to callers, translation of outreach materials, and stakeholder engagement.
6. Collect data and conduct evaluation activities to determine if the hotline is meeting stated goals and objectives.

Before a Hate Crime Hotline is implemented, these core operational components should be addressed:



## The response model

What is the model for the hotline response? Will there be real-time responses (versus a tip line where callers leave messages for follow-up)? Will coverage be 24/7 or different availability? Will the hotline operate as a traditional phone line, or use other modalities (e.g. text, chat)? What will your response strategy be for different kinds of callers? Will staff offer referrals to community services? Assistance with reporting to law enforcement? Will staff provide direct assistance to callers (e.g. crisis intervention, peer support, safety planning)? How will callers' privacy and confidentiality be protected in the response process?

## The database for referrals to community services

If the hotline will provide referrals to community services, how will you build and maintain the database of services? What kinds of services will you include for referral? Will there be follow-up with callers who are referred out? How will relationships with community partners be maintained? How will callers' privacy and confidentiality be protected in the referral process?

## The IT infrastructure

What investment in IT—technology, equipment, and data management software—is required? How will you determine the scope of the infrastructure you need? What can you afford? Is your infrastructure scalable? What happens in a natural disaster or power outage? What are the cost implications over time of the technology you have chosen (e.g., for long term data storage)? How will your technology and data management protect callers' privacy and confidentiality?

## The staffing plan & policies

How many staff will you need to staff your hotline to achieve full coverage? Is your staffing plan scalable? Will your staff be paid professionals, volunteers, or a hybrid approach? What is the job description of your call takers? How will you identify, hire, recruit, train, and sustain your work force? What training will be necessary and who will do it? How often will re-training and assessment be necessary? How and when will you separate staff who are not working out?

## The plan for attending to wellness

How will you assess staff's readiness to work on the hotline? What is your plan for staff wellness, support, and retention in doing this difficult work? How will you do staff supervision and oversight? How will supervisors be trained to look for and respond to signs of vicarious trauma impacting staff? The nature of your missions means you may attract staff and volunteers who have lived experience with hate crime. How will you address that? How will you create and operationalize a trauma-informed culture?

*The Office for Victims of Crime is grateful for the thoughtful assistance of experts from the National Domestic Violence Hotline in framing this section. OVC's website includes a [short video](#) by the NDVH discussing these critical components of hotline operations.*