

# ESCALATION OF BIAS AND HATE

In order to respond to bias and hate incidents within a framework that also considers prevention, it is helpful to understand the ways in which bias has the potential to escalate toward hate if not addressed. Below are resources to understand (1) the “Pyramid of Hate,” a model that describes how bias and hate escalate, (2) important terminology, and (3) known hate symbols.

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For further information visit:

**[adl.org/hateuncycled](https://adl.org/hateuncycled)**

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# Pyramid of Hate



# The Pyramid of Hate demonstrates that when people accept one level of behavior, it becomes easier to accept the behaviors on the next levels of the escalation toward hate.

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## Pyramid of Hate

The Pyramid of Hate shows bias-motivated behaviors growing in complexity from the bottom to the top. Although the behaviors at each level negatively impact individuals and groups, as incidents move up the pyramid, the behaviors have more serious emotional and life-threatening consequences. As with a physical pyramid, the upper levels are supported by the lower levels. If people or institutions treat behaviors on the lower levels as being acceptable or “normal,” the behaviors at the next level become more acceptable. Conversely, addressing and challenging biased attitudes and behaviors conveys the message that they are unacceptable, and this can interrupt the escalation.

As you assess your campus for bias, discrimination, and bias-motivated violence, consider strategies and interventions that interrupt the escalation toward hate at each level. You can also explore the concept of a Pyramid of Alliance. For each of the examples of hate and bias on campus, consider the steps and processes it would take to build alliances along that continuum.

## Definition of Terms and Hate Symbols

[www.adl.org/educationglossary](http://www.adl.org/educationglossary)

[www.adl.org/hatesymbols](http://www.adl.org/hatesymbols)

**BIAS:** An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment.

**PREJUDICE:** Prejudging or making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes.

**BIGOTRY:** An unreasonable or irrational attachment to negative stereotypes and prejudices.

**HATE:** Hate is an extreme dislike for something or someone. If that hate is based on an aspect of someone’s identity (e.g., race, religion, gender/gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, etc.), it can result in interpersonal bias, discrimination, hate incidents, hate crimes, and/or involvement in an organized hate group.

**MICROAGGRESSIONS:** The everyday slights, indignities, put-downs, and insults that people of color, women, LGBTQ populations, and other marginalized people experience in their day-to-day interactions. Microaggressions can appear to be a compliment, but contain a “metacommunication” or hidden insult to the target groups to which it is delivered. They are often outside the level of conscious awareness of the perpetrator, which means they can be unintentional. These messages may be sent verbally (“you speak good English”), nonverbally (clutching one’s purse more tightly), or environmentally (symbols like the Confederate flag or using Native American mascots).

**CULTURAL APPROPRIATION:** When people use specific elements of a culture (e.g., ideas, symbols, images, clothing) without regard for that culture. It usually happens when one group exploits the culture of another group, often with little understanding of the group’s history, experience, and traditions.

**DIVERSITY:** Different or varied. The population of the United States is made up of people from different places and from diverse racial and cultural groups.

**INCLUSION:** An environment and commitment to support, represent, and embrace diverse social groups and identities; an environment where all people feel they belong. (In K-12 learning environments, inclusion can sometimes also refer to the practice of integrating students with disabilities into the mainstream classroom setting.)

**EQUITY:** Everyone getting what they need in order to have access, opportunities, and a fair chance to succeed. This term recognizes that the same for everyone (equality) doesn’t truly address the differences in need, and how specific solutions and remedies, which may be different for various needs, are necessary.