

Some Information Regarding the Community Relations Services (CRS)

CRS, an agency within the U.S. Department of Justice, was created under Title X of the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964 signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964. Title X of the 1964 law mandated CRS' creation and its duties and responsibilities. Pursuant to the Hate Crimes Protection Act, CRS is authorized to work with communities to help them develop the capacity to prevent and respond more effectively to violent hate crimes allegedly committed on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

CRS serves as the Department's "peacemaker" for community conflicts and tensions arising from actual or perceived discriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin. CRS also helps communities prevent and respond to violent hate crimes committed on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. CRS provides specialized mediation and conciliation services to state, local and federal officials and communities throughout the United States. The Agency's goal is to assist in resolving and preventing racial, ethnic and national origin community conflicts, civil disorder, and violent hate crimes on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

CRS has 10 Regional offices and 4 field offices in the following locations: Boston; New York; Philadelphia; Chicago (field office in Detroit); Kansas City, MO; Denver; Los Angeles (field office in San Francisco); Dallas (field office in Houston); Atlanta (field office in Miami); and Seattle.

CRS is a remarkably unique federal component dedicated to assisting state and local units of government, private and public organizations, and community groups develop local capacity to prevent racial and ethnic tensions. CRS can also assist willing parties and explore opportunities to develop and implement local strategies that can help law enforcement, local officials, civil rights organizations, and interested community groups respond to alleged hate crimes and find ways to prevent future incidents. CRS conciliators also assist in restoring stability and accord to communities following civil disorder, or in initiating rumor control to prevent misinformation from spreading throughout a community.

State and local law enforcement officials and community leaders may contact CRS to request assistance in improving communication between law enforcement and community members in the aftermath of a hate crime. CRS improves community response mechanisms, by facilitating the development of community capacity to help prevent hate crimes with services and programs that include: conciliation, mediation, training, technical assistance, and other tension reduction techniques.

CRS may help facilitate dialogue between law enforcement and community members to increase mutual understanding about the investigative and prosecutorial process as well as the concerns of people in the community.

CRS is able to address the perception of discrimination that can be as disruptive to community stability as actual discrimination. CRS does not have law enforcement authority, nor does it investigate or prosecute cases. As an impartial agency, CRS does not look to assign blame or fault to any individual or group. In contrast, CRS enables communities to develop and implement their own solutions to reducing tensions as a neutral conciliator. Furthermore, as alternatives to coercion or litigation, CRS facilitates the development of viable and voluntary solutions for resolution of community tension.

CRS has implemented several strategies, which are intended to effectively address the issues of discriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin, which impair the rights of people, and

work with communities to help prevent and respond to violent hate crimes on the basis of actual or perceived gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. CRS conducts training with federal, state, and local law enforcement and community members to address concerns regarding racial profiling and to improve law enforcement officials' interactions with community members. Examples of various CRS strategies and programs are:

Anti-Racial Profiling Program is a program that reviews the history and concept of profiling by police in addressing criminal activity. The program focuses on the complexities of using race as a factor in police investigations. Through a series of videotape and role playing exercises, law enforcement and community members view the effects of racial profiling on communities, as well as ways to defuse racial profiling allegations whenever they arise.

City - Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together (City-SPIRIT) Program is a two-day problem solving and resolution program that brings together representatives from local government agencies, community, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, and businesses to develop collaborative approaches for reducing racial conflicts and addressing the factors that contribute to the conflicts. The parties may also develop approaches for preventing and responding to violent hate crimes on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. This program helps communities establish a lasting capacity to prevent and respond to conflicts.

***Excerpted from U.S. Department of Justice/Community Relations Services Performance Budget FY2014**

LINKS: <http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/jmd/legacy/2014/02/10/crs-justification.pdf>
<http://www.justice.gov/crs>