

**BIAS AND HATE INCIDENT REPORTING WORK GROUP
AGENDA**

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

6:00 p.m.

55 Church Street & Zoom Video Conference

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://concordma.zoom.us/j/84035478238?pwd=gvX5VUB7MZE32PKSnRlgL5VoXKo2F3.1>

Meeting ID: 840 3547 8238

Passcode: 697178

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Public Comments**
- 3. Approval of Available Minutes**
 - February 3, 2026 Minutes
- 4. Discuss Focus Group Insights**
- 5. Finalize Structure and Content of Incident Intake Information/Form**
- 6. Discuss Reporting Mechanisms**
- 7. Upcoming Meeting Schedule**
- 8. Adjournment**

BIAS AND HATE INCIDENT REPORTING WORK GROUP MINUTES

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

6:30 p.m.

55 Church Street & Zoom Video Conference

Attendees: Sandeep Pisharody, Daniel Hart, Debbie Dorfman, Agnes Lubega-Kalisa, Paul Boehm, Jessica Porter, Kerry Lafleur (online)

1. Call to Order: 6:32

2. Public Comments

No public comments at this time

3. Approval of Available Minutes

Mr. Pisharody motioned to approve the minutes of February 3, 2026

Ms. Dorfman seconded

All in favor: Mr. Pisharody, Mr. Hart, Ms. Dorfman, Ms. Lubega-Kalisa and Mr. Boehm

4. Discuss Top 5-10 specific Learnings from Phase 1 Briefings

The group had several briefings in the past 3 months (Town Counsel, Concord Safe, Concord Police, Carlos Hoyt Jr, Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan, Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council). They discussed and reflected on what they have learned. They revisited holding a possible public forum and the members agree there is value in hosting one, but timing is still to be determined. Unlike focus groups, a public forum would be larger and less interactive, better suited for presenting a draft proposal and gathering broader feedback rather than collecting initial input.

The group held one focus group on January 13, 2026 and reflected on the value of the focus groups, that it provided meaningful insights. Key themes emerging from recent briefings and discussions include usability, trust, anonymity, legal constraints, and system coordination. The second focus group is Thursday, February 5, 2026 at the Goodwin Forum.

Ms. Rosenfeld suggested to hold a separate focus group for young people to gather their perspectives. The importance of acting on reports to maintain community trust was emphasized as a key takeaway.

The group also specifically discussed public reaction to DA Ryan's comments about incident reports from Concord and clarified confusion about where reports originated. While reports were said to be "from Concord," most were filed by Concord Police as part of standard protocol after receiving complaints from individuals. The schools report incidents to the police, and the police then report to the DA's office—so the DA's statement was technically accurate, but the process created confusion about the true source of reports. Members agreed the situation highlights broader issues like limited visibility into how school, police, and DA systems connect, agree that there is a need for better coordination between the town and schools, while respecting confidentiality laws like Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

There was also concern about public perception—whether Concord has more incidents or simply stronger reporting. Members cautioned against speculation or comparisons without clear data and reinforced the need for the town to design a clear, coordinated reporting system that builds trust, ensures follow-through, and avoids confusion.

5. Review Work Plan

The group is transitioning into designing the reporting system and they plan to address foundational questions such as:

- What qualifies as an incident?
- Who can report?
- How should reporting occur?
- What barriers might exist?

The goal is to develop a draft design, likely by the end of the first quarter, and then present it publicly for feedback before finalizing. The immediate focus is defining what constitutes an incident and reflecting on insights gathered from prior briefings and focus groups.

The group engaged in a thorough discussion about building a coordinated, town-wide reporting system, with trust emerging as the central theme. Members emphasized that requiring names can discourage reporting—particularly among vulnerable communities such as immigrants—and that fear of identification remains a significant barrier. While legal constraints such as public records laws, mandatory reporting requirements, criminal thresholds, and civil discovery rules may complicate promises of anonymity, the group agreed not to eliminate anonymous reporting without first seeking clearer legal guidance, potentially from Town Counsel. They also discussed creating a multifaceted system—offering phone, email, online, in-person, and mail options—to promote accessibility and equity.

Legal and operational realities were key considerations. Mandatory reporting laws, potential criminal implications, and public records requirements create complexity, and strong coordination between the town, police, schools, and possibly community organizations will be essential. Members stressed the importance of avoiding duplication, reducing confusion, and preventing individuals from having to repeatedly retell traumatic experiences as reports move between entities. While Concord PD and the DA's office already contribute to a statewide reporting portal, current data likely underrepresents incidents, and Concord lacks a comprehensive town-wide mechanism. Although funding and staffing needs are real concerns, the group agreed not to limit the system's design prematurely. Overall, the shared direction is to develop a trusted, coordinated reporting system that encourages honest reporting, strengthens partnerships, and addresses underreporting while legal and operational details continue to be refined.

Mr. Boehm introduced the concept of an “incident life cycle” to frame the reporting system as part of a larger ecosystem rather than just a data tool. The proposed cycle includes:

1. A harm-doer and an incident
2. Reporting (victim or bystander)
3. Immediate response and support for the victim
4. Data capture
5. Incident analysis and trend review
6. Town-level response
7. Community action and education
8. Long-term reduction of harm

He emphasized that the group's work (the reporting mechanism) is only one part of this broader system. The most important immediate step after an incident should be supporting the victim, not just collecting data.

The group emphasized that transparency and public accountability must be central to the reporting system. Data trends should be shared publicly, along with visible updates—potentially on an annual basis—about how the Town is responding. Members noted that an initial increase in reports may reflect growing trust in the system rather than an increase in harm, and that a well-functioning reporting channel could reduce the need for individuals to raise concerns in public meetings by providing a more appropriate pathway. The system's life cycle should include clear referral pathways to police, the DA, or other relevant agencies, ensuring it operates as part of a coordinated network rather than in isolation.

Victim support was identified as a top priority. Members agreed that meaningful response—not just a callback—should define success, with metrics such as whether a response was provided, the timeliness of that response, satisfaction with the outcome (potentially measured through surveys), and whether support was offered or requested. Providing this level of care and follow-through will require staffing or clearly assigned responsibility, similar to the role Human Rights Commissions play in other communities. Overall, the group affirmed that the system must prioritize victim support, contribute to broader community education and action, generate reliable trend data, and build trust through transparency and responsiveness.

6. Begin Phase 2 Discussions - Definition and Categorization of “Incidents”

Mr. Boehm shifted the conversation to defining “What is an incident?” as part of building the reporting system. He proposed that an incident can be categorized using three core components:

1. Where it occurred (location/category of setting)
2. The basis of the bias (race, religion, gender, etc.)
3. The type of incident (verbal, physical, vandalism, discrimination, etc.)

The group also discussed intake categories that would be good to add in the form.

They started with how to categorize “where incidents” (location) happen without requiring overly specific addresses.

Examples included:

- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Law enforcement
- Public accommodations
- Public spaces

The group raised important questions about jurisdictional boundaries between schools and the town, including how to handle incidents that occur at school-sponsored events off-site, on school buses versus at bus stops, and whether both school and town systems could receive reports. Members agreed that the town should offer its own reporting option even if schools maintain a separate system, underscoring the need for clear coordination to avoid confusion or gaps. They also emphasized that reporting categories should remain simple yet flexible, including an “Other” option, and acknowledged that further refinement—particularly around location categories—is needed.

The group compared bias categories from Boston College and Georgetown and discussed expanding the list.

Additional categories suggested:

- Immigration status
- Language/accent
- Pregnancy
- Parental status
- Veteran status
- Marital status
- Housing status (houselessness)
- Ex-offender status

It was agreed that the reporting categories should be broad, allow for multiple selections to reflect intersectionality, and always include an “Other” option, recognizing that no list will ever be perfect but that inclusivity must remain the priority. They also discussed how to define the threshold for bias—whether it should be based on discomfort, harm, demeaning behavior, or the targeting of an intrinsic or perceived characteristic. Ultimately, the group leaned toward allowing individuals to define their experience of harm subjectively rather than imposing a narrow or rigid definition.

Examples discussed for the type of Incidents were:

- Physical assault
- Verbal harassment
- Written harassment
- Vandalism/property damage
- Online/social media
- Non-verbal gestures
- Intimidation

The group raised the importance of carefully structuring report categories, noting that certain terms such as “assault” and “discrimination” carry specific legal definitions. They agreed that reports should allow multiple category selections and include an “Other” checkbox to support inclusive data coding. A narrative description box was considered essential, as structured categories support data analysis while free-text responses provide critical context and detail. Broadly, members agreed that an incident report should help answer the key questions—Who, What, Where, When, and How—while balancing simplicity with meaningful data capture. The goal is not to perfectly define harm, but to create a system that enables individuals to report when they feel targeted based on a protected or intrinsic characteristic. The group believes most key elements have been identified and will continue refining categories, with the next meeting focusing on who reports, who receives reports, reporting mechanisms, and barriers to reporting.

Overall, this discussion moved the group from abstract planning into concrete design decisions about how incidents will be defined and captured in the reporting system.

The group also discussed the possibility of holding a third focus group specifically for youth to gather feedback on the proposed reporting system, with consensus leaning toward middle and high school students (grades 6–12), as elementary students were considered too young. Members emphasized the need for clear age parameters and formal parental consent, agreeing that outreach must go through parents and school leadership to avoid missteps or public controversy.

Both Mr. Pisharody and Mr. Williams suggested that coordinating outreach should be through the school administration, the DEI/DEIB Director, the Superintendent, PTGs, school communication channels like their newsletters, and *The Concord Bridge*, as well as potentially leveraging existing youth-focused events.

The discussion was tabled for further consideration, with Mr. Boehm planning to explore best practices and members reflecting on how to engage the youth without duplicating school efforts. The group expressed strong interest in youth input but agreed to proceed thoughtfully with clear consent, coordination, and communication.

Additional considerations included an upcoming public forum at the library and the possibility of offering a third adult session, an all-ages session, or a virtual option to improve accessibility during winter months. Overall,

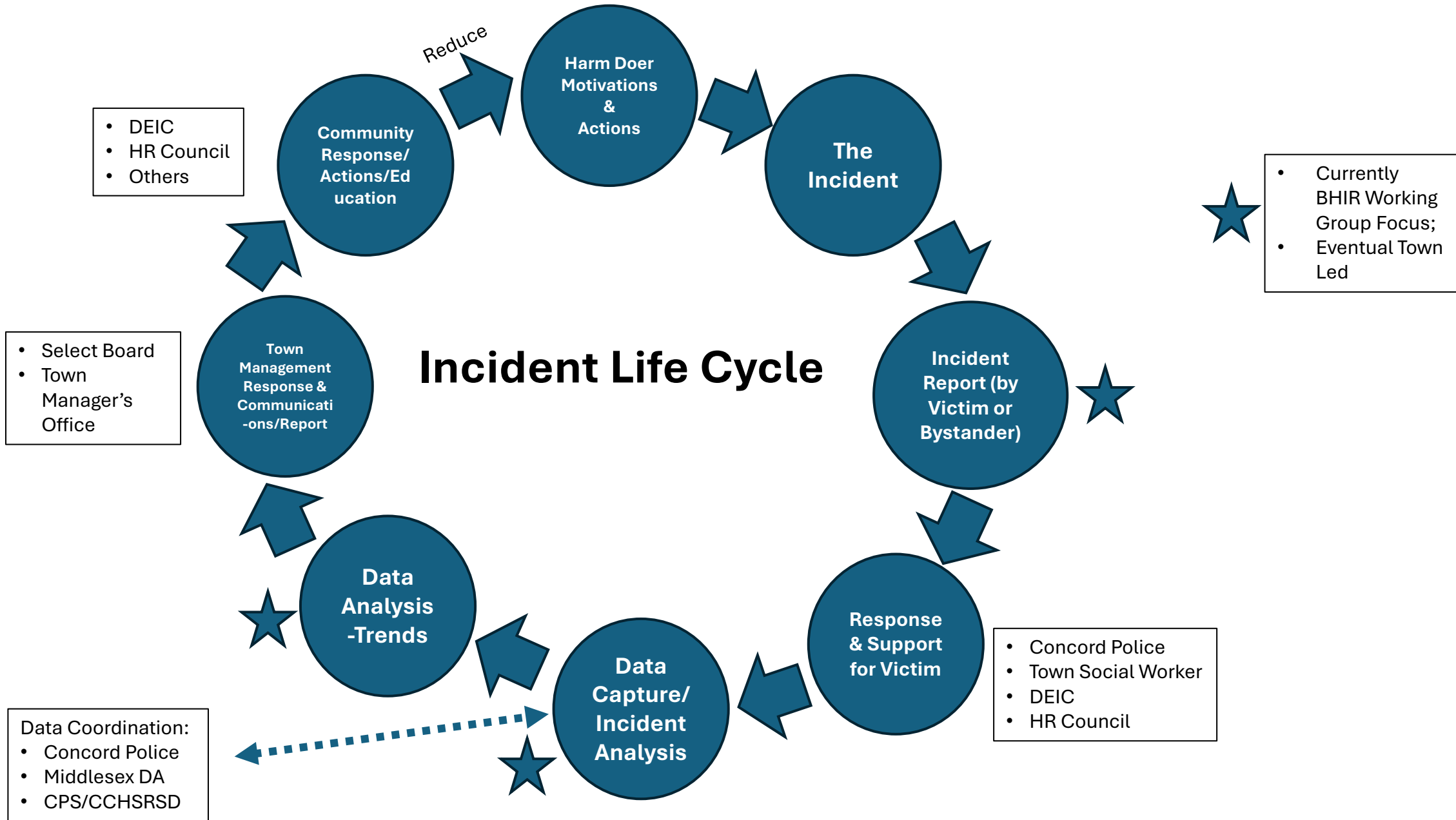
Ms. Lubega-Kalisa was tasked to come up with the correct language for use for “area of incident”

Mr. Pisharody will develop a comprehensive list of bias categories by synthesizing examples from Georgetown and Boston College and will share his compiled “brain dump” documents with the committee via email for review.

7. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Ms. Begley to send a doodle poll on next meeting dates before the quarter concluded.

8. Adjournment: 8:11pm



4 sections of our reporting data intake (i.e., form or interviewer questions) that we need to cover. We should ask “the reporter”:

1- What do you think was the motivation of the harm-doer that caused you to feel harmed, unsafe, insulted and/or uncomfortable?

2- What was the type of harm inflicted (choose one or more categories)?

3- Where did the incident take place?

4- in the space below, please add any additional information on the incident.

Legally Protected Characteristics

- **Identity & Demographics**
 - Race
 - Color
 - Ethnicity
 - National origin
 - Ancestry
 - Citizenship or immigration status
- **Religion & Belief**
 - Religion
 - Religious denomination or sect
 - Lack of religious belief
 - Religious dress, symbols, or practices
- **Sex, Gender & Sexuality**
 - Sex
 - Gender identity
 - Gender expression
 - Sexual orientation
 - Pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition
- **Disability & Health**
 - Physical disability
 - Mental health condition
 - Cognitive or learning disability
 - Neurodivergence
 - Sensory disability (vision, hearing, etc.)
 - Chronic or serious medical condition
- **Age & Genetics**
 - Age
 - Genetic information

Policy-Protected, Perception-Based or Other Bias

- **Language & Communication**
 - Native language
 - Accent or dialect
 - English proficiency
 - Speech or communication differences
- **Family & Caregiving**
 - Marital status
 - Parental status
 - Caregiver responsibilities
 - Family structure
- **Socioeconomic & Education**
 - Socioeconomic status
 - Income or financial situation
 - Housing status
 - Educational background
 - Type of school or institution attended
- **Employment & Professional Status**
 - Job role or title
 - Seniority or tenure
 - Employment status (e.g., contract, temporary, unemployed)
 - Career path or non-traditional background
- **Appearance & Presentation**
 - Body size or weight
 - Height

- Clothing or dress style
 - Hair style, texture, or grooming
 - Tattoos or piercings
- **Culture & Social Identity**
 - Cultural practices or customs
 - Cultural values or norms
 - Name or naming conventions
 - Perceived “fit,” belonging, or professionalism
- **Political, Civic, or Ideological**
 - Political views or affiliation
 - Civic engagement or activism
 - Union membership or organizing
 - Public speech or advocacy
- **Technology & Digital Factors**
 - Online presence or social media activity
 - Use or non-use of technology
 - Automated or algorithmic decisions
 - Accessibility of digital systems
- **Association & Retaliation**
 - Association with another person or group
 - Retaliation after raising concerns
 - Bias based on assumptions or stereotypes
 - Repeated microaggressions
- **Veteran Status**
- **Other**
- **Multiple/Intersectional**

Bias and Hate Incident Reporting System

For the Town of Concord, Massachusetts

Considerations for a Framework for Decision-Making

Presentation Overview

- **1. Setting the Stage**
Why Concord needs this system
- **2. Lay of the Land**
MA and national examples
- **3. Legal & Policy Framework**
Critical compliance considerations
- **4. Proposed System for Concord**
Design options and decision points
- **5. Success Metrics**
Measuring effectiveness
- **6. Next Steps • 7. Budget • 8. Call to Action**

Section 1

Setting the Stage

The Problem: A Critical Data Gap

What Concord Doesn't Track

- Bias incidents below criminal threshold
- Microaggressions and discriminatory behavior
- Identity-based harassment
- School and public space incidents
- Community member experiences

National/State Context

Placeholder for:

- National underreporting statistics
- Gap: hate crimes vs. bias incidents
- Community impact data
- Reporting barriers research

Placeholder for Massachusetts data

Why Does Concord Need This System?

DRAFT

Recent Incidents

Anti-semitic bias in past months in public spaces and schools have highlighted urgent need

Proactive Safety

Building inclusive environment and preventing escalation

Resident Feedback

No clear avenue to report non-criminal bias incidents

DEI & Wellbeing

Part of broader initiative to support all community members

When, Where, and What

WHEN

Recent incidents in past few months have brought urgency to this issue

WHERE

- Public spaces
- Schools
- Community facilities

WHAT

Primarily anti-semitic incidents, but comprehensive system needed for all forms of bias

Who: Key Stakeholders

Open for discussion and expansion by committee

Who Is Affected

- Students/families
- Targeted groups
- Residents
- Businesses
- General public
- *[More TBD]*

Part of Solution

- Town officials
- Police
- Schools
- Community orgs
- Residents
- *[More TBD]*

Intended Users

- Victims/targets
- Witnesses
- Third-party
- Advocates
- *[Scope TBD]*

Section 2

Lay of the Land

Massachusetts Communities

Towns with reporting systems + slots for additional examples

Newton

Online bias/discrimination portal

Lexington

Bias incident report form

Acton-Boxborough

Bias/microaggression protocol

Belmont

Bias incident protocols

Wellesley

Bias response procedures

Boston Public Schools

Equity reporting form

[Additional MA examples to be added]

National Examples & Best Practices

University Systems

- Georgetown, UIC, Indiana
- Marquette, Oregon State
- Williams, Syracuse, many others

Common features:

- Online with anonymous options
- Trained Response Teams
- Educational focus

Municipal/City & State

- Cities: Eden Prairie MN, Phoenix AZ, Philadelphia PA
- States: Oregon Bias Hotline, Connecticut, Vermont, Maryland

[Additional examples TBD]

Key Features from National Models

- Online reporting with anonymous options
- Trained Bias Response Teams (multiple departments)
- Support services for affected individuals
- Educational responses over punitive
- Data tracking and trend analysis
- Clear definitions: bias incidents vs. hate crimes
- Law enforcement connection when appropriate
- Restorative practices options

Section 3

Legal & Policy Framework

Critical Compliance and Risk Considerations

Eight Critical Legal Questions

Each requires legal counsel review

1. Legal Authority: Can town establish this?
2. Confidentiality: Protecting reporter info?
3. Legal Responsibilities: Obligations from data?
4. Data Protection: Security requirements?
5. Reporting Requirements: Additional obligations?
6. Record Management: Expungement protocols?
7. First Amendment: Protecting free speech?
8. Inter-System Coordination: Shared data handling?

First Amendment Concerns

CRITICAL CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE

Multiple universities faced lawsuits (Speech First cases) over systems alleged to chill free speech. Supreme Court hasn't ruled definitively.

Key Concerns

- Chilling protected speech
- Anonymous reporting & due process
- Vague 'bias' definitions
- Viewpoint discrimination risk

Required Safeguards

- Narrow, precise definitions
- Distinguish: protected speech vs. violations
- Constitutional compliance review
- Educational focus reduces risk

Legal Framework: Key Takeaway

Comprehensive legal review is ESSENTIAL for compliance, risk mitigation, and system integrity.

Research has identified key issues, but formal legal counsel must review all eight areas before implementation.

Section 4

Proposed System for Concord

Design Options and Decision Points

How People Would Report

Maximum accessibility and inclusivity

Multiple Channels

- Online 24/7, Phone, Email
- In-person, Mobile app
- Paper forms, Text/SMS
- QR codes in public

Inclusive Features

Languages: English, Spanish, French, Greek, Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic, Tamil + more
Anonymous OR Confidential
Victim/Bystander/Third-party
One universal form

⚠️ DECISION POINT: Third-party reporting - Accept? How handled vs. direct reports?

Who Would Manage Reports

✓ **CRITICAL: Trained Bias Response Team ESSENTIAL** per community feedback

Staffing Options for Discussion:

- Option 1: Dedicated Team (1-3 FTE)
- Option 2: Within existing dept (0.5-2 FTE)
- Option 3: Hybrid committee (1 FTE coord)

All require: bias recognition, trauma response, cultural competency, legal compliance training

What Information Would Be Collected

Incident Details

- Date, time, location
- Description & evidence
- Individuals/witnesses
- Impact & desired outcome
- Severity: Low/Med/High/Danger

(Auto-prompt: Call 911 if danger)

Type of Bias (Comprehensive)

- Race, Religion, National origin
- Gender/identity, Sexual orientation
- Disability, Age, Language
- Immigration status, Socioeconomic
- Veteran, Pregnancy/Parental
- Other, Multiple/Intersectional

Geographic Scope & Eligibility

⚠️ DECISION POINTS

Where incidents occur?

Concord only? Residents anywhere? Hybrid approach? Town can offer support regardless of location even with limited jurisdiction.

Who can report?

Residents only? + Workers? + Students? Anyone experiencing bias in Concord? (Broader = more comprehensive but higher volume)

Response Philosophy & Threshold

Principle: Anyone can report. Not all incidents need same response. Education often better than punishment. Context & cultural competency essential.

Example: Cultural/Linguistic

Non-native speaker says something inappropriate to native speaker

- Report accepted
- Context considered
- Education + support + dialogue
- Not punitive unless pattern

Tiered Response

Level 1: Microaggressions → Education

Level 2: Repeated bias → Intervention

Level 3: Severe/threats → Investigation/police

Safeguards Against Misuse

Context: Systems used by 1-3% of population annually. Small group filing disproportionately would be visible in data.

Risks

- Bad faith reports
- "Moral policing"
- Chilling legitimate discourse
- Undermined credibility

Safeguards

- Clear definitions/boundaries
- Pattern recognition in triage
- Consequences for misuse
- Due process protections
- Public education & transparency

Support & Resources Offered

Mental Health

Counseling, trauma care, crisis intervention, culturally responsive

Legal

Info/referrals, Know Your Rights, legal aid, immigration support

Safety

Planning, security measures, law enforcement connection

Mediation

Dialogue, restorative practices, conflict resolution

Education

Anti-bias training, cultural competency, bystander intervention

Community

Faith groups, affinity groups, advocacy orgs (ADL, NAACP, etc.)

Implementation Timeline

⚠ REQUIRES DISCUSSION

- What are implementation phases?
- Realistic timeframe for each?
- Dependencies (legal, budget, hiring, tech)?
- Quick wins vs. long-term buildout?
- Pilot program before full launch?

Section 5

Success Metrics

Measuring Success

Trust is central - but how do we measure it?

Quantitative metrics alone will NOT capture success. Trust emerged as central theme but is difficult to measure.

Quantitative

The "countable"

Reports, response times, resolution rates, training completion

Limitation: Numbers don't tell full story

Qualitative

The "meaningful"

Reporter satisfaction, community surveys, focus groups, stories of impact, changes in dialogue

Trust Indicators

The "essential"

Willingness to report, feeling heard/supported, community belief system works

Challenge: Hard to measure authentically

Success Metrics: Discussion Needed

- What does success look like for Concord?
- Balance accountability vs. trust-building?
- Who should define success metrics?
- How measure trust authentically?
- Surveys sufficient or need ongoing dialogue?

Section 6

Next Steps

Next Steps: To Be Determined

Requires collaborative discussion:

- • Immediate actions needed
- • Decision process and timeline
- • Stakeholders to involve
- • Approval pathways
- • Milestones and phases
- • Responsible parties

Placeholders for: Action items, Timeline/Gantt, RACI matrix, Dependencies

Section 7

Budget Considerations

Cost Categories to Consider

Staffing (ongoing)

Salaries/benefits, FTE 0.5-3.0, training, overtime

Technology (one-time + ongoing)

Platform, mobile app, database, multilingual, security

Training

Initial + ongoing, community ed, consultants

Support Services

Counseling, legal, mediation, translation, materials

Community Engagement

Marketing, meetings, printed materials, partnerships

Legal & Compliance

Counsel review, policy development, insurance, records

Cost of Inaction

- Potential legal liability from inadequate response
- Community harm and eroded trust
- Lost opportunity for early intervention
- Incident escalation
- Reputational damage
- Economic development impact
- Continued lack of community data

Potential Funding Sources

Traditional Sources

- Town operating budget
- Federal grants (DOJ, HUD)
- State grants (MA Exec Office Public Safety, Community Foundation)
- Private foundation grants
- Community fundraising

Collaborative Approaches

- Partnership cost-sharing:
 - School districts
 - Regional collaboration
- Phased implementation
- Grant opportunities to offset costs

Budget Scenarios

⚠️ **DECISION: Which implementation model?**

Minimum Viable

0.5-1 FTE
Basic form
Referral support

Lower cost but may not meet expectations

Recommended

1-2 FTE
Multi-channel
Adequate support

Balanced approach

Comprehensive

2-3 FTE
Full-service tech
Direct support

Higher cost, max impact

Section 8

Call to Action

How Will Concord Move Forward?

- Option 1: Approve Full Implementation
- Option 2: Approve Pilot Program
- Option 3: Conduct Feasibility Study
- Option 4: Form Implementation Committee
- Option 5: Regional Collaboration
- Option 6: Phased Approach
- Option 7: Defer Decision

What action will Concord take to address bias incidents and rebuild community trust?

Decision required from leadership

Thank You

This presentation provides a comprehensive framework
for informed decision-making on Concord's
Bias and Hate Incident Reporting System

Questions and Discussion