

Supporting Jewish Students, Parents, and Guardians in Indiana Schools

A Handbook

2025-2026



Supporting Jewish Students, Parents and Guardians in Indiana Schools 2025-2026

What Every Parent Should Know

Jewish students deserve a safe, respectful, and inclusive school environment. Federal and state laws prohibit discrimination, harassment, and bullying based on religion, ethnicity, or national origin. Unfortunately, incidents of antisemitism—ranging from harmful stereotypes to overt harassment—occur in schools all too frequently.

This section is designed to equip you with tools to support your child, recognize problematic behavior, and engage effectively with school personnel in our current environment.

Recognizing Discrimination and Antisemitism

Discrimination or harassment can include:

- Antisemitic slurs, jokes, or stereotypes.
- Graffiti or symbols such as swastikas.
- Exclusion from peer groups or clubs based on religion.
- Biased classroom discussions about Jewish history, Israel, or Judaism.
- Mockery of religious practices or observance (e.g., wearing a kippah or observing holidays).
- Pressure to participate in religious activities that conflict with Jewish beliefs.

For more examples, please refer to Appendix A. The intensity of both intent and impact can vary. Take concerns raised by your students seriously.

Religion in the Classroom

Public schools may teach about religion in an academic, non-devotional manner. Your child may encounter units that explore Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other world religions. Instruction must:

- Be age-appropriate and educational in nature.
- Avoid promoting or denigrating any religion.
- Allow students to engage with the topic respectfully.

What to Do If There's a Problem

1. Document the Incident: Write down the details, including what happened, who was involved, where it took place, and when. A contemporaneous record is important as subsequent retellings and recollections are less reliable.

2. Talk with Your Child's Teacher or Counselor: Request a meeting to express your concerns and seek support.
3. Report to the School Administration: Request to speak with the principal or designated school administrator responsible for handling harassment and discrimination complaints. Submit the incident through your school or school district's preferred reporting app or tool. Example: The Stop It app in Carmel Clay Schools.
5. Confirm Discussion Details: Reiterate important points and agreed upon action items via email after any discussions with teachers or administrators.
6. Report the Incident: Inform the JCRC through its K-12 incident reporting system at www.indyjcrc.org/parent-support
7. Submit a Formal Complaint: Schools are required to have a procedure for filing formal complaints related to discrimination, harassment, or bullying.
8. Request an Investigation: Schools are expected to respond promptly—typically within a few school days.
9. Work with the JCRC: The JCRC and other community partners can help determine what outcome you hope to achieve and who is best placed to assist in accomplishing that goal.

Your Rights During the Process

- You may request that your identity or your child's identity remain confidential to the extent possible.
- You have the right to receive updates about the school's response and any findings.
- You may file a complaint with your state department of education or the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights if necessary.
- If the problem persists you can consider legal recourse through organizations such as the Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under the Law. www.brandeiscenter.com

Retaliation Is Prohibited

It is illegal for a school or its staff to retaliate against a student or family for reporting discrimination or harassment. If retaliation occurs, notify the school immediately and consider seeking legal counsel or advocacy support.

Being Proactive

- Build relationships with teachers, counselors, and administrators.
- Connect with the [JCRC School Leaders Network](#) representative for your school.
- Inform staff that your family is Jewish and share any relevant information.
- Share dates of Jewish holidays and ask about policies for excused absences and food accommodations. Provide copies of the JCRC's [5 Year Holiday Planning Calendar](#).
- Ask whether the school provides education about antisemitism, the Holocaust, and religious tolerance. Share that the JCRC can provide free [Holocaust education opportunities](#).
- Volunteer or attend school events to remain visible and involved.

When to Seek Additional Help

You should reach out to the JCRC at any point you need assistance. However, if you try to address the situation individually but you feel local school responses have fallen short or if the issue is ongoing, we urge you to contact the JCRC or another Jewish advocacy organization at that point. These groups can provide guidance, advocacy, legal support, and educational tools.

- [Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council](#)
- [Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis](#)
- [Anti-Defamation League](#)
- [American Jewish Committee](#)
- [StandWithUs](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)
- [Indiana Department of Homeland Security School Safety/Bullying](#)

Final Thoughts

- You are your child's most important advocate.
- Stay calm, persistent, and collaborative.
- Keep communication open, take notes, and follow up.
- Know that change often takes time—but your actions can help create safer schools for all children.

Step-by-Step Guide to Addressing Issues in School

How to Support Your Child

When your child tells you about experiencing discrimination at school, listen, and offer support. It is normal for you to feel upset, but it will be more reassuring to your child if you can keep your emotions in check. Gather as much detail as you can and take notes for reference. Visit <http://www.indyjcrc/parent-support> for further resources, to report the incident, and for contact information for the JCRC School Leaders Network representative at your school.

Who To Talk To

Contact these people, in the order below, to report an incident. * If you don't get a satisfactory response, escalate the issue to the next level. Contact information for all personnel listed below should be on your school website. (Check at the side or bottom of the home page.) If you can't find it, call the school office or your school district to ask. You don't have to identify yourself.

1. **Your child's teacher.**
2. **Your school administrator (principal or vice principal).**
You are entitled to bypass the teacher and go directly to the principal. You may prefer this option if:
 - You don't feel comfortable talking to the teacher.
 - The teacher is the source of the concern.
 - The issue doesn't involve the teacher or happened outside the class setting.

While policies may vary slightly, schools and school districts generally require principals to follow a set process when they learn about an incident of antisemitism or other discrimination. Ask your principal for more information.

3. If you haven't had an acceptable resolution, reach out to a Jewish communal organization for help.

You can email JCRC Executive Director David Sklar at dsklar@indyjcrc.org or contact the JCRC at info@indyjcrc.org.

4. Your school board.

School board members are elected and represent the local community. Depending on your district, one of them may be specifically designated as your school liaison.

*Keep in mind the difference between being uncomfortable and something that is actionable. Recognize that this may be a long process and can take time. Responses and addressing the issue may or may not occur overnight. If the need is systemic change or policy review, this will take time. Reach out calmly and with a clear plan of action and intention (see below).

What To Say and Do

It can feel awkward, uncomfortable, or intimidating to tell a teacher or principal about antisemitism. Still, it's possible to approach your school in a way that best helps you find a resolution. Make clear that you want to support them in supporting their students and would like to be seen as a partner and resource in addressing the issue. Below, you'll find sample language for these conversations; you can adapt them and make them your own.

Requesting a Meeting and Preparation

Keep your email request short and neutral in tone. Example:

"Hi, Mr. Smith — Michael had an experience in class today that made him uncomfortable (OR: anxious/unsafe). I'd like to meet with you to get your sense of what happened and discuss how to address it. Please let me know your availability."

- An in-person meeting is ideal for best communication. Second-best is a virtual meeting; third is a phone call.
- Plan what to say and consider your goals. Try to come equipped with actionable requests; do not expect any tangible changes to be offered unilaterally without asking for them. If you're nervous, practice with someone else. Make and bring notes to stay on track.
- Some potential goals to consider, depending on the incident, could be:
 - Acknowledgement or Apology
 - Education (for students, staff or teachers). For instance, Holocaust education is mandated in the State of Indiana. The JCRC can provide information and access to resources.
 - Disciplinary action or enforcement of the code of conduct or school policy
 - Review of school policy or code of conduct
- If haven't reached an acceptable outcome contact the JCRC for support.
- If possible, bring another person to the meeting to act as an advocate or witness, and task that person with taking careful notes. That will allow you to participate more actively in the conversation.

In the Meeting

- Stay calm. This might be difficult, but it gives you a better chance of being heard. It can help ease tension if you admit at the start that this situation is upsetting to you. Acknowledging your emotion at an early stage while you remain collected mitigates the damage in the event you lose your composure later.
- Remember that you are there to get a fuller understanding of the event—and be willing to collaborate on a resolution.
- Relay what you've heard from your child and explain how they (and you) feel.
- Get their observations, ask questions, and restate what they say to confirm:
"It sounds as if your view of the situation was ABC You mentioned that you had observed XYZ. Am I getting that right? I want to be sure I'm understanding this correctly..."
- Take notes.
- If the issue involves another student, try—at least at first—not to judge. Social media is full of misinformation (inaccurate) and disinformation (deliberately wrong). It's common for kids to repost or say things without fully understanding their meaning/implications (e.g., "From the river to the sea").
- Always ask for a response by a set time—and follow up if you don't hear back. You may have several conversations at one level as you work toward a resolution. If you don't see progress or a good-faith effort within a reasonable time, escalate the concern.

After the Meeting

Email your thanks and summarize the meeting, points of agreement, loose ends, next steps, and timeline for the expected response. This provides you with a necessary paper trail. Do this after each meeting, for example:

"Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. To help us keep track of the details, I've summarized our discussion in the points below. Please let me know if I've missed anything."

Remember

- Avoid getting worked up or visibly angry. (If you tear up or cry, it's OKAY.)
- Don't issue threats or ultimatums.
- Take notes on every conversation and keep them in one place.
- Don't leave without a clear understanding of what's next, and a timeline.

District & School Quick Links

Every district maintains nondiscrimination/anti-harassment policies and a Title IX/VI coordinator. Use the online forms when available and always follow-up by email.

- **Carmel Clay Schools**
 - Policy: — [Board Policy 4362 — Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment](#);
 - Complaint form: [Discrimination/Harassment & Title IX Complaint Form](#)
 - Coordinator: Dr. Holly Herrera — (317) 844-9961
- **Westfield Washington Schools**
 - Policy & coordinators: [Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Statement](#)
 - Title IX Coordinator: Chris Baldwin (Director of HR) — (317) 867-8012 —

baldwinc@wws.k12.in.us

• Section 504: Chase Stinson — (317) 867-8006 — stinsonc@wws.k12.in.us

- **MSD Washington Township**

- Title IX & Civil Rights: [Process & forms](#)

- Formal complaint: [MSDWT Complaint Form - Online Submission](#)

- Coordinator: Dr. Matt Kaiser (Asst. Superintendent of Operational Services) — (317) 205-3332 ext. 77259

- **MSD of Pike Township**

- Title IX: [Title IX page](#)

- Policy: [Non-Discrimination Policy](#)

- Coordinator: Dr. Justin Hunter — JHunter@pike.k12.in.us — (317) 293-0393

- **Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School**

- Policy: [Title IX Policy](#); [ATIXA model Title IX policy](#)

- Main line: (317) 524-7050

Other area schools (info pages)

[Park Tudor](#)

[University High School](#)

[Sycamore School](#)

[The Orchard School](#)

Appendix A: Forms of Antisemitism Students May Encounter or Perpetrate

Using these examples as a guide, students may face any or all of the following forms of antisemitism, among others:

Classical antisemitism:

- Negative stereotypes about Jews (e.g., being greedy, controlling).
- Conspiracy theories about Jewish influence or power.
- False accusations that Jews kill Christians for ritual purposes.
- Marginalizing and excluding Jews from social circles and clubs.
- Organized riots and violence targeting Jewish communities.
- Holocaust denial or distortion:
 - Claiming the Holocaust did not occur.
 - Denying the facts of the Holocaust, including that gas chambers never existed and downplaying the number of Jews killed.
 - Trivializing or minimizing the Holocaust's impact.
 - Blaming Jews for their own victimization during the Holocaust, such as suggesting they brought persecution upon themselves.

Contemporary antisemitism:

- Equating Jews with negative attributes like colonialism or genocide.
- Denying Israel's right to exist.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the State of Israel.
- Applying double standards by requiring of Israel a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Claiming that all Jews are white.
- Accusing Jewish people of dual loyalty.

Subtle antisemitism:

- Insensitive jokes or remarks.
- Dismissing Jewish holidays, traditions, or religious practices as insignificant or strange.
- Excluding Jewish students from activities or discussions related to their identity.
- Assuming all Jewish people share the same beliefs and perspectives.
- Dismissing antisemitic acts as overreactions or misunderstandings, thereby invalidating Jewish experiences of discrimination.
- Tokenizing Jewish individuals or references to fit your own narrative.

Appendix B: Recognizing Antisemitism

Antisemitism is often hard to identify, especially for students. The following are examples of how antisemitism may manifest itself in a school setting.

Language & symbols

- Slurs or derogatory terms specific to Jews.
- Use of Nazi symbols (Hakenkreuz or German "hooked cross"), Hitler salutes, or Holocaust imagery.
- Referring to Jewish people in terms that stereotype them as excessively focused on money, exercising unwarranted power or control, or engaging in secret work contrary to the interests of society.
- Using language that perpetuates stereotypes about Jewish people being deceitful, selfish, or obsessed with money.

Behavior & Actions

- Bullying or physical harassment of Jewish students.
- Treating Jewish individuals unfairly in school settings.
- Making biased decisions that negatively impact Jewish students such as announcing a test on a Jewish holiday.
- Vandalism targeting Jewish individuals or property (e.g., student lockers).
- Distributing hate literature that promotes antisemitic ideas or stereotypes.

Social Dynamics

- Social exclusion or isolation of Jewish students.
- Pressuring Jewish students to hide their identity or beliefs.
- Treating Jewish individuals as representatives of their entire community or expecting them to speak on behalf of all Jewish people.
- Preventing Jewish individuals from accessing opportunities, promotions, or recognition in school or work environments.
- Failing to acknowledge or accommodate Jewish holidays, dietary restrictions, or religious practices in school or workplace settings.
- Using Jewish symbols and/or traditions inappropriately or without understanding their significance.
- Underrepresentation - Intentionally having few or no Jewish individuals in leadership, teaching, or influential roles within the school or student clubs.