



ADL®

Resource for Healthcare Workers and Students

Know Your Rights: Addressing Antisemitism in Healthcare Workplaces

Together—we can
fight hate for good.

Know Your Rights: Addressing Antisemitism in Healthcare Workplaces

*Disclaimer: *This resource is not intended to and should not be interpreted as providing legal advice. Please consult with your own legal counsel.*

This resource is for medical professionals, healthcare staff, and students and trainees in health care settings who experience antisemitic discrimination, harassment, or hostility at work—whether it comes from colleagues, supervisors, vendors, or patients. It is general information, not legal advice, and it does not replace your employer’s policies or guidance from a qualified attorney.

1. What Antisemitism Can Look Like at Work

Antisemitism in healthcare settings may come from colleagues, supervisors, vendors, or patients. Examples include:

- Slurs, stereotypes, tropes, or “jokes” about Jews or Israelis
- Hostility toward Jewish religious practices, names, clothing, or symbols
- Repeated hostile comments about “Zionists” or “Zionism” that target and isolate Jewish staff
- Singling someone out to answer for Israel or Middle East politics because they are Jewish
- Exclusion, ostracism, or professional isolation tied to Jewish or Israeli identity
- Unequal treatment (e.g., less desirable assignments, denial of training opportunities, unfair scheduling, or exclusion from team communications)
- Intimidation, threats, vandalism of personal workspace, or hostile messages
- Patient-based hostility, including patients refusing care from Jewish providers or making antisemitic remarks

More information on how antisemitism manifests can be found via these resources:

1. ADL Not On My Campus: <https://notoleranceforantisemitism.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/what-antisemitism-anti-zionism-criticism-israel>
2. Antisemitism Uncovered: <https://antisemitism.adl.org/>

2. Legal Protections

a. Health Systems and Hospitals – Health systems and hospitals are governed by a wide variety of federal, state and local laws, regulations, and standards that include prohibitions of any form of discrimination against healthcare workers and individuals. This includes antisemitic or anti-Zionist harassment or discrimination based on a patient’s actual or perceived religion, national origin, or shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.

If you believe any healthcare professional or worker has engaged in discriminatory conduct toward you or others, you have multiple avenues for seeking assistance.

All hospitals are required to maintain systems for the filing of confidential complaints or grievances. Any such complaint or grievance must be treated seriously and the failure of a hospital to properly address a complaint or grievance can result in investigation and disciplinary measures by federal and state regulatory agencies.

b. Hospital Medical Staffs – For physicians, hospital medical staffs are required by federal and state laws and regulations to address any behavior that undermines a culture of safety. This includes acts of discrimination, harassment and intimidation. Medical Staff Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, and Policies include the requirement that any member of the medical staff comply with basic ethical and non-discriminatory behavioral requirements.

Physicians experiencing any discrimination may file complaints with the hospital and medical staff. Any such complaint or grievance must be treated seriously and the failure of a hospital and/or medical staff to properly address a complaint or grievance can result in investigation and disciplinary measures by federal and state regulatory agencies, and hospital accreditation bodies, e.g. The Joint Commission.

c. Workers in Medical Groups, Private Companies or Other Healthcare Entities – Healthcare takes place in a wide variety of settings beyond hospitals and health systems. Federal and state anti-discrimination laws and regulations apply equally in these settings. Many operate under bylaws, rules and regulations, and/or policies and procedures which specifically prohibit discriminatory conduct by contracted or employed workers. Healthcare professionals and workers should consult these bylaws, rules and regulations, and policies and procedures for the specific prohibitions and processes for reporting discriminatory conduct.

d. State Licensing Boards for Healthcare Professionals – States have licensing boards for healthcare professionals, e.g. physicians, nurses, psychologists, etc., which set forth standards and codes of conduct that prohibit any form of discrimination by licensed healthcare professionals. These licensing boards have complaint and reporting systems that allow individuals to report any discriminatory conduct by a healthcare professional licensed by that agency. Consult the licensing board websites in your state for their complaint and reporting process.

e. State Licensing Agencies for Healthcare Facilities – States also have agencies that license hospitals, health plans and other forms of healthcare entities. These agencies enforce laws, regulations and standards which any licensed entity must abide by and maintain as a condition of licensure. These include the requirement that a licensed entity maintain an environment for patients and healthcare workers that is free from discrimination, harassment and intimidation. These agencies have complaint and reporting systems for any individual that witnesses discriminatory conduct in a licensed entity.

3. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Employees)

- Prohibits employment discrimination and harassment based on religion. Many antisemitic incidents may also manifest as race- or national origin-based discrimination, depending on the facts.
- Requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent and correct harassment and discrimination.
- Harassment may be unlawful when it is **severe or pervasive** enough to affect the terms and conditions of employment.
- **Retaliation is prohibited.** Employers may not take adverse action (such as termination, demotion, or undesirable assignments) because you reported discrimination or participated in an investigation.
- Claims generally must be filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) within **180 days** (or up to **300 days** in some states).

More information on Title VII can be found via these resources:

1. ADL Title VII Factsheet: <https://notoleranceforantisemitism.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/know-your-rights-title-vii-factsheet>
2. EEOC What to Do If You Face Antisemitism at Work: https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/WTD%20Antisemitism%20at%20Work%20May%202023-9_508%20final.pdf
3. Enforcement Guidance on Harassment in the Workplace: <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-harassment-workplace>
4. EEOC Enforcement Guidance on National Origin Discrimination: <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/eeoc-enforcement-guidance-national-origin-discrimination>
5. Guidance on Religious Discrimination: <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/section-12-religious-discrimination>

State Employment Discrimination Laws

- Most states have their own anti-discrimination statutes, which may provide broader protections than federal law.
- State agencies may handle complaints independently or jointly with the EEOC.

4. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Students and Trainees)

- Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin—including shared Jewish ancestry and ethnic characteristics—in educational programs that receive federal funding.
- Applies to many medical schools, training programs, and teaching hospitals.
- Medical students and trainees should report concerns through their school's civil rights office, dean's office, or designated nondiscrimination coordinator.
- If you experience discrimination in a federally funded medical school or training program, you may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR), generally within **180 days** of the discriminatory conduct. OCRCComplaint@hhs.gov. File your complaint with DOE if your institution receives DOE funding, or with HHS if it receives HHS funding. You can file at either agency's OCR if both provide funding for your institution. *To determine where federal funding of your school originates, you can consult:* <https://www.usaspending.gov/>

More information on HHS OCR's enforcement authority and complaint process can be found here:

1. Background on Filing a Civil Rights Complaint: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/filing-a-complaint/index.html>
2. Complaint Portal: https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/cp/complaint_frontpage.jsf?lang=en
3. Laws, Regulations, and Guidance Enforced by OCR: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-providers/laws-regulations-guidance/index.html>
4. What Healthcare Entities Are Covered: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-providers/provider-obligations/index.html#covered-entity>

More information on the DOE OCR's enforcement authority and complaint process can be found here:

5. Background on Filing a Civil Rights Complaint: <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/file-complaint/how-file-discrimination-complaint-ocr>
6. Complaint Portal: <https://ocrcas.ed.gov>
7. Laws and Guidance Enforced by DOE OCR: <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-policy-guidance>

5. If You Experience Antisemitic Discrimination or Harassment: What to Do

Step 1: Immediate Safety and Patient-Care Priorities

- If there is **any threat of violence**, follow facility safety protocols immediately (security, supervisor-on-duty, incident command) and call emergency services if needed.
- If harassment occurs during patient care:
 - Involve a charge nurse, attending physician, supervisor, or security if behavior escalates
 - When clinically appropriate and consistent with policy, request reassignment and document the reason.

Step 2: Create a Factual Record

As soon as possible, record:

- Date, time, location/unit, and shift
- Who was involved (names and titles) and any witnesses
- What happened (exact words if possible, especially slurs or threats)
- Your response and any steps taken
- Impact (work disruption, patient-care impact, emotional distress, missed opportunities, etc.)

Keep notes factual and avoid speculation

Step 3: Preserve Evidence (Where Lawful and Consistent with Policy)

- Emails, texts, chats, or paging logs
- Photos of vandalism, graffiti, or postings
- Screenshots or copies of schedules, evaluations, or assignments
- Names and contact information of witnesses
- Incident or security report numbers

Step 4: Report Internally

Reporting internally and promptly generally strengthens your protections.

- ▀ **Human Resources (HR):** Typically responsible for receiving complaints and coordinating investigations
- ▀ **Supervisor or manager:** If your supervisor is involved or unresponsive, escalate to next-level leadership or use an alternate reporting channel

Step 5: Report Externally (Can Be Done in Parallel with Internal Reporting)

- ▀ **EEOC or state civil rights agency (employees):** You may file a complaint under Title VII or applicable state law. Consider consulting an attorney for guidance.
- ▀ **HHS Office for Civil Rights (students and trainees):** If you experience discrimination in a federally funded medical school, training program, or teaching hospital, you may file a complaint—generally within 180 days.
- ▀ **Anti-Defamation League (ADL):** Report antisemitic incidents so ADL can track patterns and, where appropriate, respond. Reports may also be made anonymously if you wish. You can report incidents to ADL at: <https://www.adl.org/reportincident>
- ▀ **ADL Legal Action Network:** If you are seeking potential pro bono legal assistance, submit a report at: <https://www.adl.org/adl-legal-action>

About ADL

ADL is the world's leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all. Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all.

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