

Understanding Antisemitism: A Guide for University Administrators

Fostering Safe and Inclusive Campuses



What is Antisemitism?

Antisemitism is hatred, prejudice, or discrimination against Jewish people. It manifests through stereotypes, harmful rhetoric, exclusion, and acts of violence. University administrators play a vital role in addressing antisemitism to ensure a safe environment for all students, faculty, and staff.

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

Adopted in 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition provides a clear framework:

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

Key Points

- **Perception:** Antisemitism is rooted in stereotypes and prejudices.
- **Manifestations:** Includes hate speech, vandalism, exclusion, or violence targeting Jewish individuals or institutions.

Examples of Antisemitism on Campus

1. **Speech and Rhetoric:** Denying the Holocaust, perpetuating stereotypes (e.g., "Jews control the banks"), or calling for Israel's destruction when framed as hatred toward Jews.
2. **Acts of Discrimination:** Vandalism (e.g., swastikas on Jewish property), exclusion from activities, or targeted harassment.

Why the IHRA Definition Matters

The IHRA definition equips universities to:

- **Identify Antisemitism:** Provide clarity for addressing incidents.
- **Support Jewish Students:** Ensure safety and inclusion for all.
- **Educate:** Promote awareness through workshops and training.
- **Uphold Values:** Signal commitment to diversity and respect.

Applying the IHRA Definition

1. **Policy Development:** Include the IHRA definition in conduct codes; establish clear reporting protocols.
2. **Awareness:** Train staff and students to recognize antisemitism; host workshops on its history and modern forms.
3. **Support Services:** Offer resources, counseling, and support groups for affected students.
4. **Incident Response:** Ensure timely and fair investigations while upholding free speech principles.

Practical Scenarios

- **Social Media Post:** A student perpetuates stereotypes about Jewish control of banks—antisemitic rhetoric.
- **Vandalism:** Swastikas painted on a Jewish fraternity house—antisemitic hate act.
- **Hate Speech:** A speaker calls for the destruction of Israel in a way that targets Jews—antisemitic under IHRA.