

Dealing with Protestors at Your Institution



If your institution is the subject of picketing or protest, these guidelines may be of assistance. You should not hesitate to call law enforcement if you feel threatened in any way.

Remember, every protest is different and not everything below applies to every situation.

Do not engage/debate protestors

- § No one should speak to or respond in any way to the protestors, especially constituents or staff entering or leaving the facility.
- § Educate your staff as to what you expect of them during the protest.
- § We do not recommend holding counter-protests or educational events at the same location as, or close to, the protest. If you do so, you will bring protestors and counter-protestors together and dramatically increased security is likely to be warranted; speak to the police department about this. Also, even if you hold a counter-protest or counter-programming far away from the event, be prepared for those returning to your institution to have to walk past protestors.

Contact the police department

- § Notify the police of the protest.
- § If you feel you need it (and err sharply on the side of caution here), ask for the police to send officers to the event to help maintain your security.
- § Specifically notify the police if the protestors are on your property, are acting in a threatening manner, or use any violence or threats of violence. Do this even if the police are present.
- § Discuss what permitting requirements may be necessary for the protest and any counter protests.
- § Discuss the question of whether it is advisable to make alternative business arrangements for the day.

Review and maintain your security procedures

- § Ensure that your institution's rules and procedures for dealing with who gets into your facility are sufficient and are functioning.
- § Practice (have a rehearsal) those rules with all staff.

- § Be prepared to enforce those rules against potential protestors.
- § Closely monitor who gains access to your facility.
- § Ensure that all of your security devices are working and used (including door locks and alarm systems).
- § Ensure that unused and unmonitored entrances are closed.
- § Beyond access control, ensure that all of your institutions security procedures are sufficient and functioning.
- § To the extent you are comfortable and feel safe doing so, it may be useful to video or photograph the protestor(s). Speak to an attorney about legal issues that may be related to this.
- § Additional information about security for Jewish communal institutions can be found at www.adl.org/security.

Identify any vulnerable constituents

- § Consider making an alternative arrangement, including using other entrances, driveways, etc, for children and/or guests who may be particularly vulnerable to anything the protestors do or say.
- § Using entrances further away from the protest may prevent unwanted altercations/confrontations.

Contact your attorney

- § Reach out to your lawyer, who can help you understand where protestors may lawfully be and what rights you have. If you do not have an attorney, you might be able to find legal assistance through a local bar association.
- § Protestors may have legal rights to protest near your facility; your lawyer can assist you with this determination.
- § Protestors' speech and expression (including distributing flyers and other materials; chanting; holding signs; photos) may be legally protected speech.

Consider Hiring Security Professionals

- § A private security professional may offer guidance and personnel for dealing with a protest.

- § Your situation may warrant such additional help; we cannot offer guidance as to whether it does or not.
- § Your local police department may be willing to help in this regard.
- § If you elect to hire security guards, you may wish to consider hiring off duty law enforcement officers.

Prepare a media response

- § Protests are intended to attract the attention of the community and they may draw a media response.
- § Should any media arrive, you might wish to have a short, prepared statement. We suggest not engaging the protestors on any level.
- § Any such statement should be in simple, short declarative sentences.
- § Craft your message before you are interviewed. Develop two or three key points and stick to them.

Contact the Anti-Defamation League

- § Your local ADL office can assist you with responding to the protest and dealing with media.
- § ADL can also help provide education to you, your leadership, your employees and your constituents, especially if the group is an extremist or anti-Semitic group.
- § ADL has online resources about security and extremists. You may also be interested in our guide, *Responding to Extremist Speech* which can be found at <http://www.adl.org/20faq/20q.html>

For more information, contact your local ADL office or visit us on the web at www.adl.org.