



## **Holliston Youth and Family Services**

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**Jaclyn Winer, LICSW**

*Director of Holliston Youth and Family Services*

**Travis Ahern**

*Town Administrator*

**Matthew Putvinski**

*Chair, Youth Advisory Board*

Dear Holliston Community,

Holliston Youth and Family Services, in collaboration with the Holliston Youth Advisory Board, stands united in expressing our deep concern regarding recent discovery of Swastikas found at Damigella Sports Field. Hate speech, including antisemitic and racist actions, inflicts fear and trauma upon our community. These events run counter to the values we aspire to embody in Holliston: respect, inclusivity, neighborliness, and tolerance. It is evident that we have work to do in cultivating these values within our community.

Our collective responsibility is to unequivocally denounce such acts and strive for a community where safety is a top concern. We must prioritize and uphold the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The timing of this incident during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, a celebration of joy and unity, serves as a stark reminder of the presence of hate within our midst. We stand in support of Temple Beth Torah and community members who have been most closely impacted.

However, we must also acknowledge that antisemitism is not the only form of hate that continues to surface in our community. Discrimination, racism, bullying, and other forms of bias persist. To truly address these issues, we must engage in challenging conversations and confront oppression in all its forms, both within our schools and throughout our community. Focusing solely on schools will not suffice; we must address the broader problem.

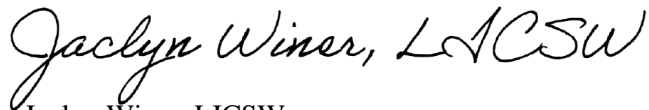
Our strength lies in collective action and our steadfast dedication to the "What happens next" approach. To aid these crucial discussions, we have created a sample script and book recommendations in partnership with the Holliston Public Library. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Town Administrator's office, the Holliston Police Department, and the Holliston Public Schools for their swift response. It is our shared responsibility to assess the community's needs and collaborate in addressing them effectively.

Holliston Youth and Family Services remains steadfast in our mission to provide inclusive behavioral health support and resources that cater to the unique needs of children and families in Holliston. We stand alongside the following organizations and individuals who are dedicated to fostering greater inclusion for Holliston's youth and families:

Diverse Holliston  
Holliston PTO  
The Holliston Youth Advisory Board  
Holliston Drug and Alcohol Awareness Coalition  
Holliston Public Library  
Holliston Public Schools

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us for support or guidance following this incident. We value your input and would appreciate your suggestions on how we can better serve our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaclyn Winer, LICSW". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jaclyn Winer, LICSW  
Program Director  
Holliston Youth and Family Services



**Sample Script for Talking to Your Child (Adapted from the [National Traumatic Stress Network](#) TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT HATE CRIMES AND ANTISEMITISM)**

**(Note: This is a universal dialogue that should be tailored to your child's age and development. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach)**

Parent: "Hey [Child's Name], I wanted to talk to you about something important. Some hurtful and offensive things were found near your school."

Child: "What happened, Mom/Dad?"

Parent: "Well, there was an incident where some people left behind hurtful messages aimed at Jewish people. It's called anti-Semitism, and it's a form of hate. I want you to know that this kind of behavior is never okay, and it's something we should always speak out against."

Child: "Why would someone do that?"

Parent: "Sometimes, people do things like this because they don't understand or because they have their own problems. But it's crucial for us to stand up against it and support each other."

Child: "What can we do about it?"

Parent: "We can do a lot, actually. First, we should always treat everyone with respect and kindness, no matter who they are or where they come from. If you ever hear someone saying hurtful things, tell them it's not okay and that we should be respectful to each other."

Parent: "It's also important to know that we're not alone in this. There are trusted adults, like teachers, neighbors, and friends, who can help us if we ever feel unsafe or see someone being treated unfairly."

Parent: "Now, I want to ask you, [Child's Name], have you heard anything about this in the news or from your friends? It's important to know what you already understand and what questions you might have."

Child: "I heard something from my friend, but I didn't understand it."

Parent: "That's okay. It's normal to have questions when we hear about these things. We can talk about it together, and I'll do my best to answer your questions."

Parent: "Also, remember that some people might have different beliefs or come from different backgrounds, and that's what makes our world diverse and interesting. We should always be open to learning from others and respecting their differences."

Remember, [Child's Name], we're here to support each other, and together we can make a positive difference in our community by standing up against hate and promoting love and understanding

**Additional Points to Discuss:**

1. **Recognizing Common Reactions:** It's normal to feel various emotions like fear, anger, and sadness when we hear about hate crimes. Children may also have these feelings, and it's okay to talk about them.

2. **Empowering Children:** Let your child know that they can always talk to you or another trusted adult if they have questions or concerns. You can also discuss strategies for responding to hate speech or bullying.
3. **Promoting Values:** Discuss the values of respect, tolerance, and diversity with your child. Encourage them to stand up for what is right and support others who may be targeted by hate.

Furthermore, we'd like to recommend some age-appropriate books that can be helpful in teaching children about antisemitism. To learn more about books appropriate in teaching other forms of oppression such as bias, bullying, diversity, and social justice the Holliston Public Schools recommends visiting the resource library with the [Anti-Defamation League](#) linked here.

### **Elementary**

1. Rivka's Presents by Laurie Wallmark
2. As Good as Anybody by Richard Michelson
3. The Tower of Life: How Yaffa Eliach Rebuilt Her Town in Stories and Photographs by Chana Stiefel

### **Middle**

1. Linked, by Gordon Korman
2. No Vacancy by Tziporah Cohen
3. Blackbird Girls by Anne Blankman

### **High**

1. The Chosen by Chaim Potok
2. The Assignment by Liza Wiemer
3. Incantation by Alice Hoffman

These books can serve as valuable tools to promote understanding and empathy among children.

Let us remember that as a community, our strength lies in our collective actions and commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. We must continue to work together to ensure that Holliston remains a place where everyone feels safe, valued, and respected.

### **Sources:**

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-children-about-hate-crimes-and-anti-semitism>

<https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature>