



SUBJ: Harvard, Fordham Psychologists Launch New Initiative to Combat Antisemitism in Mental Health and Psychology Training

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Media Contact: aen@berlinrosen.com

As Antisemitism Threatens Patient Care and Professional Training, New Initiative Aims to Transform Psychology Education

Harvard Medical School and Fordham University Psychologists to Lead Multi-State Pilot Program to Address Antisemitism in Clinical Education and Practice

Washington, DC – As antisemitism increasingly affects health care, mental health services, and professional training environments, the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) is supporting a new initiative designed to strengthen the ability of future psychologists to provide competent, evidence-based care to Jewish patients and communities.

The initiative addresses a growing concern among psychologists, medical professionals, and Jewish advocacy organizations: that antisemitism is increasingly entering the institutions responsible for training mental health providers, creating risks not only for Jewish students and clinicians but also for the quality of care provided to patients. When bias becomes embedded in professional training, it can shape how future clinicians understand Jewish identity, recognize antisemitism, and respond to the experiences of Jewish patients seeking care.

The initiative comes amid [growing alarm](#) over antisemitism in the mental health profession, with Jewish clinicians, students, and patients raising urgent concerns about bias, discrimination, and the exclusion of Jewish identity from diversity and clinical training frameworks. Research shows that [75 percent of Jewish medical professionals](#) have reported experiencing antisemitism in the workplace since October 7, 2023 – just last week, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services opened a federal civil rights [investigation](#) into the American Psychological Association (APA) over allegations of discrimination against Jewish and Israeli psychologists – while scholars and practitioners

have increasingly warned that ideological frameworks entering psychology and counseling education can marginalize Jewish experiences and undermine culturally responsive care. Among the frameworks drawing growing scrutiny is "[decolonization therapy](#)," an emerging approach that critics say labels Zionism as a source of mental illness, marginalizes Jewish experiences, and undermines culturally responsive care.

For Jewish communities, the stakes extend beyond education: psychology doctoral programs train the next generation of clinicians who will provide care to patients navigating trauma, discrimination, and anxiety at the individual and communal levels. These programs serve as the primary pipeline into the mental health profession, shaping how future psychologists understand culture, bias, trauma, and patient care long before they enter hospitals, clinics, counseling centers, and private practice.

In response, AEN is supporting, through a multi-year Antisemitism Education Initiative grant, a pioneering pilot program led by Dr. Miri Bar-Halpern of Harvard Medical School and Dr. Dean McKay of Fordham University. Through curriculum development, faculty workshops, and an ongoing community of practice, the initiative will teach participants to recognize contemporary manifestations of antisemitism, understand the mental health impact of traumatic invalidation, and incorporate these insights into both training and clinical supervision. Beginning with doctoral psychology programs across New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, the pilot will create a network of faculty leaders who can adapt the training for their own campuses and professional communities. The long-term goal is to establish a national model that helps reshape how psychology programs understand and address antisemitism while fostering greater inclusion of Jewish identity in professional training.

"When antisemitism begins shaping how future clinicians are trained, the consequences extend far beyond the classroom," said **Miriam Eiman, Executive Director of AEN**. "Future psychologists will care for patients from every background. Ensuring that they understand antisemitism and Jewish identity is essential to providing ethical, culturally responsive care and maintaining trust in the mental health professions."

Bar-Halpern and McKay are among the [leading voices](#) addressing antisemitism in mental health and psychology education. A Lecturer in Psychology at Harvard Medical School and Director of Trauma Training and Services at Parents for Peace, Bar-Halpern has become a prominent advocate on the mental health impacts of antisemitism and traumatic invalidation. McKay, a Professor of Psychology at Fordham University and former President of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, has emerged as a leading scholar examining antisemitism within mental health professions. Together, they are helping shape how psychology programs understand and respond to contemporary antisemitism.

"Real change begins in education," said **Dr. Miri Bar-Halpern, Lecturer in Psychology at Harvard Medical School and Director of Trauma Training and Services at Parents**

for Peace. "Training programs shape the next generation of psychologists, and if we want future clinicians who can effectively support Jewish clients, that change must begin in doctoral training."

"Psychology faculty have an extraordinary influence on the future of the profession," said **Dr. Dean McKay, Professor of Psychology at Fordham University.** "This initiative will help ensure that future clinicians are equipped to recognize antisemitism, understand its impact, and provide care that is both culturally responsive and evidence-based."

AEN's new initiative is part of its broader Antisemitism Education Initiative (AEI), which since 2022 has invested nearly \$1 million in faculty-led projects that develop innovative, scalable responses to antisemitism and anti-Israel bias in American higher education. The grants, awarded through a rigorous application and review process, provide up to \$25,000 annually for as many as three years to support the development and piloting of sustainable educational initiatives. AEI-supported programs have gone on to establish lasting educational infrastructure on campuses across the country, including the fellowship & summer institute on Antisemitism and Jewish Identity in Educational Settings at George Washington University, UC Berkeley's Antisemitism Education Initiative, and pioneering efforts to strengthen Black-Jewish cooperation in combating antisemitism at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Several of these projects have become self-sustaining programs that continue to educate faculty, administrators, and students long after the initial grant period. Through these initiatives, AEN is building a growing network of faculty leaders who are creating sustainable solutions to one of higher education's most urgent challenges.

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AEN is a national organization that mobilizes networks of university faculty and administrators to counter antisemitism, oppose the denigration of Jewish and Zionist identities, promote academic freedom, and advance education about Israel. More at <https://academicengagement.org/> and <https://www.facultyagainstantisemitism.org/>.