

Know Your Rights*

The Safe Worship Zone Law

New York State has a new law that makes it a **crime** to block, intimidate, or threaten people who are entering or leaving a synagogue, religious school, Jewish community center, or other place of religious worship.

- WHAT THE LAW COVERS

The law protects synagogues, religious schools, Jewish community centers and other houses of worship - including their entrances, exits, parking lots, and driveways.¹

It creates two new prohibited forms of conduct:²

- **Blocking access:** Deliberately obstructing or interfering with an entrance or exit to make it unreasonably difficult or dangerous for any person seeking to enter/exit.
- **The 50-foot zone:** Engaging in threatening or intimidating conduct within **50 feet** of the building - roughly the length of a school bus - that causes someone entering or leaving to reasonably fear for their safety.

- WHAT TO WATCH FOR

This law may be violated if someone near your place of worship is:

- Blocking or obstructing a doorway, gate, or driveway
- Shouting threats and slurs directly at people entering or leaving
- Following, surrounding, or menacing congregants or students near the entrance
- Engaging in any course of conduct that makes a person seeking to enter/exit afraid for their safety

- WHAT TO DO

- Contact law enforcement if anyone is being threatened, blocked, or made to feel unsafe.
- Document everything and note the time, location and exact words used.
- Get a report number from the responding officer before they leave.
- Report to ADL so we can track the incident and connect you with support.

¹ "Place of religious worship" means any building or structure that a reasonable person would know that religious adherents collectively recognize as a place to regularly gather for or hold religious services, observance, prayer, assembly, education, instruction, or devotional practice, including community centers, and shall include its entrance, entryway, exit, parking lot, parking lot entrance, driveway, driveway entrance, or sidewalk that touches such places. New York Penal Law 240.00(8)

² "A person is guilty . . . when such person, with respect to an individual who was or is seeking to enter into or exit from a place of religious worship: (a) knowingly or intentionally obstructs or otherwise interferes with the entryway into or exit from a place of religious worship, for the purpose of rendering passage by that individual unreasonably difficult or hazardous; or (b) within fifty feet from a place of religious worship, knowingly or intentionally engages in a course of conduct that places that individual in reasonable fear for their safety." New York Penal Law 240.69(1).

*This document is not intended to and does not provide legal advice or guidance