

Stigma Reduction

Misinformation or wrong information about the new coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19, creates fear and bad actions that hurt people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy. Misinformation about groups of people or communities also creates fear and bad actions that make it harder to keep everyone healthy. Paired together they are even more dangerous.

Misinformation about people is one part of bias. Bias is a prejudgment or prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered unfair. People of color, people with disabilities, people living homeless, immigrants, Native Americans, people who are undocumented, people who speak languages other than English, and LGBTQ communities are often negatively impacted by bias. Bias when paired with social and economic factors often results in poor health outcomes.

Some of the early information about COVID-19 contributed to prejudice and discrimination against Asian communities. We need to be intentional and reduce the harm caused to those communities. We also need to make sure we do not create similar harm to other communities. Particularly those that have experienced discrimination and been stigmatized throughout history.

This is important because our thoughts, emotions and behaviors influence those around us. We can spread fear or we can spread connection. We are stronger as a community when we stand together against discrimination.

Take advantage of these resources to prevent, interrupt, and respond to stigma.

What we can do as individuals

- Rely on and share trusted sources of information.
- Speak up if you hear, see, or read stigmatizing or harassing comments or misinformation.
- Show compassion and support for individuals and communities more closely impacted.
- Avoid stigmatizing people who are in quarantine. They are making the right choice for their communities.
- Do not make assumptions about someone's health status based on their ethnicity, race or national origin
- Spread the facts – promote positive messages about our ALL communities
- Report discrimination.

**Anyone can get it.
Anyone can spread it.
Everyone can help
stop COVID-19.**

Spread the Facts

coronavirus.wa.gov

How to report discrimination

State, county, and city governments and other organizations often have a place to report discrimination including:

- **Washington State Human Rights Commission** — www.hum.wa.gov/file-complaint
Under the law, everyone has the right to be free from discrimination at work, in housing, in a public accommodation, or when seeking credit and insurance. Any individual who believes that they have been discriminated against based on protected class status may file a charge of discrimination by employers, housing providers, and businesses.
- **King County Office of Civil Rights** — www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/civil-rights.aspx
This office has authority to handle discrimination complaints **only for** King County government and for employers, housing providers, and businesses in the **unincorporated parts of King County** (outside the cities).
- **Seattle Office for Civil Rights** — www.seattle.gov/civilrights/civil-rights/outreach-and-engagement/bias-hurts
This office upholds laws that protect you against discriminatory harassment in housing, employment, or public places within Seattle city limits.

What we can do as professionals

- Stay updated and informed on COVID-19 to avoid miscommunication or inaccurate information
- Talk openly about the harm of stigma
- View people directly impacted by stigma as people first
- Be conscious of your language
- Acknowledge access & language barriers
- Check your own stigmas and biases
- Support community with access to credible information
- Be transparent about COVID-19
- Spread the facts

COVID-19 Heroes

Share positive actions and spotlight groups and individuals who are going the extra mile related to COVID-19 on social media using #COVID-19 Heroes. The **COVID-19 Heroes** social media campaign is an offshoot of the **Spread the Facts**.

How to Spread the Facts — Partner Tool Kit

Please use any of these materials to help with your own outreach efforts:

www.coronavirus.wa.gov/spread-facts/partner-toolkit