

Stopping the Spread of Hate: A Guide for Responding to Anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander Racism during COVID-19 (Updated 5/18/2020)

Introduction

This document seeks to empower Illinois families, caregivers, advocates, and policymakers in the field of Early Childhood with information to fight against COVID-19-related racism and prejudice, serving as an urgent call to condemn anti-Asian xenophobia and take affirmative steps to ensure the health and safety for all Illinois families.

The World Health Organization's declaration of a pandemic is a call to action to protect our public health.¹ COVID-19 is an aggressive virus that does not discriminate against race, ethnicity, color, class, gender, sexuality, ability, or citizenship status. Anyone can fall ill or carry the virus. It will require every person to rise to the occasion in order to flatten the curve to prevent catastrophic outcomes.² However, along with the COVID-19 global pandemic, there is another crisis that is rapidly spreading across the globe: the increase in anti-Asian racism and xenophobia.

Disturbingly, individuals have used terms such as "Wuhan virus" and "Chinese virus" to refer to the coronavirus.³ These comments have incited racism by placing undue blame and stigmatization on Asian Americans.⁴ [Reported incidents](#) and hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community have included racial profiling, bias incidents, vandalism, verbal and physical assaults, and other racialized acts of violence. Notably:

- Children were the target of 6% of attacks⁵, and women were 3 times more likely to be targeted than men.⁶
- In Naperville, Illinois, an elderly Asian American man was attacked with a log and spat on by two joggers.⁷
- In Los Angeles, a 16-year-old student was admitted to the emergency room after being physically assaulted by classmates who accused him of having COVID-19.⁸
- A Brooklyn woman was attacked with acid and suffered from second-degree burns.⁹
- In Midland, Texas, a Burmese man and his two young children were stabbed while shopping.¹⁰

¹ APIAF: <https://www.apiahf.org/press-release/civil-rights-and-racial-justice-organizations-denounce-discrimination-against-asian-americans-and-urge-unity-in-responding-to-coronavirus-pandemic/>

² This language is used with permission from the collective *Joint Statement: COVID-19 Related Racism* that was developed in partnership with Asian Minnesotan organizations and the Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL): <https://caalmn.org/2020/03/31/asian-minnesotan-join-statement-covid-19-related-racism/>

³ PBS: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/asian-americans-describe-gut-punch-of-racist-attacks-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

⁴ WBEZ: <https://www.wbez.org/stories/asian-americans-in-chicago-feel-the-bite-of-prejudice-during-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus/687b0f4e-fed8-4fca-90c4-b7c3c495b4cf> and WHY: <https://why.org/articles/reality-is-hitting-me-in-the-face-asian-americans-grapple-with-racism-due-to-covid-19/>

⁵ PBS: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/asian-americans-describe-gut-punch-of-racist-attacks-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

⁶ WBEZ: <https://www.wbez.org/stories/asian-americans-in-chicago-feel-the-bite-of-prejudice-during-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus/687b0f4e-fed8-4fca-90c4-b7c3c495b4cf>

⁷ WBEZ: <https://www.wbez.org/stories/asian-americans-in-chicago-feel-the-bite-of-prejudice-during-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus/687b0f4e-fed8-4fca-90c4-b7c3c495b4cf>

⁸ CBS Los Angeles: <https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2020/02/13/teen-student-in-la-assaulted-as-coronavirus-fears-stoke-racial-backlash/>

⁹ AsAmNews: <https://asamnews.com/2020/04/07/ny-mayor-vows-to-throw-the-full-force-of-the-law-to-stop-anti-asian-hate-crimes-asian-woman-suffers-second-degree-burns-in-acid-attack/>

¹⁰ CBS: <https://www.cbs7.com/content/news/FIRST-ON-CBS7-Suspect-admitted-to-trying-to-kill-family-at-Midland-Sams-Club-affidavit-says-568837371.html>

Illinois ranks third after California and New York in terms of reported incidents, according to [Stop AAPI Hate](#), an initiative to track COVID-19-related incidents in the U.S.¹¹ There is concern that incidents will rise even further after stay-at-home orders end and more people are interacting in public spaces.¹²

Illinois is one of the largest and most diverse states in the nation. The richness of our cultural diversity is what makes us strong, resilient, and capable of overcoming challenges, including the pandemic. Racism, hateful speech, and prejudice related to COVID-19 not only hurts Illinois' efforts to overcome the crisis, it compromises the safety and health of Illinois children, families, and communities. It weakens our collective ability to protect one another and work toward a healthier future.¹³

¹¹ WBEZ: <https://www.wbez.org/stories/asian-americans-in-chicago-feel-the-bite-of-prejudice-during-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus/687b0f4e-fed8-4fca-90c4-b7c3c495b4cf>

¹² Center for Integrity: <https://publicintegrity.org/health/coronavirus-and-inequality/survey-majority-of-asian-americans-have-witnessed-covid-19-bias/>; Asian Americans Advancing Justice and Hollaback! Bystander Intervention Training: <https://www.ihollaback.org/bystanderintervention/>

¹³ Asian Minnesotan organizations and CAAL: <https://caalmn.org/2020/03/31/asian-minnesotan-join-statement-covid-19-related-racism/>

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COVID-19-Related Anti-AAPI Hate Crimes and Incidents

While recent research has found that the spread of the coronavirus in the U.S. has been primarily through New York City¹⁴ with most of those cases coming from Europe¹⁵, anti-AAPI racism persists, misattributing blame for the pandemic on Asian-identified people.

In response to the increased hate crimes and discrimination related to COVID-19 the [Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council](#) launched the [Stop AAPI Hate](#) initiative to collect and document reports of incidents nationwide. The initial findings from analyses of these reports are as follows:

- Within the first three weeks of its launch, more than 1,200 reports were submitted, averaging at 100 incidents per day.¹⁶
- From mid-March to mid-April, an additional 1,500 incidents were reported.¹⁷
- Analysis of reports during the 2nd week showed that verbal harassment consisted of two-thirds of the incidents and physical assaults consisted of one in ten. Reports also include attacks on Asian American essential and frontline workers.¹⁸
- Some of these incidents include coughing and spitting at victims. These attacks are particularly alarming and aggressive given the nature of how the virus spreads through droplets of bodily fluid.¹⁹
- Despite the alarming rate, organizers state that these figures are most likely a severe undercount of the actual number of incidents occurring across the country.²⁰

In a [survey](#) conducted by Ipsos for the Center of Public Integrity, the study found that more than 30% of Americans overall have witnessed someone blaming Asian people for the coronavirus pandemic, while 60% of Asian Americans witnessed such incidents.²¹

For more information, see the following articles:

- [What's spreading faster than coronavirus in the US? Racist assaults and ignorant attacks against Asians](#)
- [Spit On, Yelled At, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for Their Safety](#)
- [Asian Americans In Chicago Feel The Bite Of Prejudice During The Spread Of The Coronavirus](#)

¹⁴ NY Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/us/new-york-city-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

¹⁵ NY Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/science/new-york-coronavirus-cases-europe-genomes.html>

¹⁶ PBS: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/asian-americans-describe-gut-punch-of-racist-attacks-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

¹⁷ Center for Integrity: <https://publicintegrity.org/health/coronavirus-and-inequality/survey-majority-of-asian-americans-have-witnessed-covid-19-bias/>

¹⁸ PBS: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/asian-americans-describe-gut-punch-of-racist-attacks-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

¹⁹ A3PCON: http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Stop_AAPI_Hate_Weekly_Report_4_3_20.pdf

²⁰ PBS: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/asian-americans-describe-gut-punch-of-racist-attacks-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

²¹ Center for Integrity: <https://publicintegrity.org/health/coronavirus-and-inequality/survey-majority-of-asian-americans-have-witnessed-covid-19-bias/>

Adverse Impact of COVID-19-Related Racism

Anti-Asian racism and xenophobia surrounding the pandemic has adverse impact on efforts to overcome the virus as well as harmful effects on the health and well-being of the AAPI community.

First, racism as a form of misplaced blame worsens efforts to overcome the pandemic in several ways²²:

- It deters focus away from scientific understanding of COVID-19 and how it spreads.
- It leads to violence and retribution against innocent people.
- It discourages people from seeking care, which creates additional danger and challenges in decreasing the number of COVID-19 cases.
- It creates a false sense of security by assigning blame on a racial group.

Second, there are negative health outcomes for people identifying as AAPI:

- [Research has shown](#) that hateful speech and racially motivated attacks have adverse impact on people's physical well-being by contributing to heart disease, respiratory illness, and chronic diseases.²³
- In addition to the stress and anxiety surrounding the pandemic, Asian Americans face additional fear for their safety due to increased racist incidents and hate crimes.²⁴
- The incidents also have had negative impact on the social and emotional well-being of the AAPI community. In a recent data analysis report from the [Crisis Text Line](#), "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have reached out to the free mental health support service to talk about the coronavirus at higher rates than other user demographics."²⁵
- With an increasingly hostile environment and growing fear of discrimination, AAPIs may be less likely to trust and seek treatment from local health systems. This is especially alarming and dangerous during a pandemic when barriers to care should be lowered, not raised.²⁶

Xenophobia, Anti-AAPI Racism, and Health Fears

It is important to understand the historical legacy of disease-related racism in the U.S. and how it has impacted the AAPI community. It informs us of the danger of discrimination during the current pandemic, and the deep importance of addressing and overcoming racism and hatred during this time.

Anti-Asian rhetoric, sentiments, and discriminatory actions have deep roots throughout U.S. history. "Asian Americans have historically been portrayed as the "Yellow Peril" – a term used to describe the centuries-old xenophobic fears about East Asians as disease carriers, among other ills."²⁷ Since the 1870s, when Chinese immigrants first came to America, they were characterized as filthy and as threats to the white working class. This led to racist attacks, segregation, and discriminatory laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the

²² CT Mirror: <https://ctmirror.org/category/ct-viewpoints/caring-for-connecticuts-south-east-asian-american-communities-during-covid-19-jason-oliver-chang/>

²³ AJPH:

<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2006.091827?HITS=10&sortspec=relevance&resourcetype=HWCIT&hits=10&andorexactfulltext=and&volume=97&searchid=1&fulltext=chronic+conditions&maxtoshow=&FIRSTINDEX=0&RESULTFORMAT=&>

²⁴ Chicago Tribune: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-nw-nyt-chinese-american-racism-coronavirus-20200323-3etjur2f6rgf5j5pxu4stvdize-story.html>

²⁵ CityLab: <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2020/04/coronavirus-racism-hate-crimes-asian-americans-xenophobia/609517/>

²⁶ Chicago Tribune: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-opinion-coronavirus-asian-americans-morita-20200420-ep3bmn3tinczfihw3qvl64boa-story.html?>

²⁷ NPR: <https://www.npr.org/local/309/2020/03/31/824397216/asian-americans-feel-the-bite-of-prejudice-during-the-c-o-v-i-d-19-pandemic>

first U.S. immigration law that excluded an entire ethnic group.²⁸ This, in turn, is part of a larger history in the U.S. of using racialized stereotypes of being diseased and unclean to discriminate against immigrants: the Germans immigrants were associated with yellow fever, Irish immigrants with cholera, Jewish immigrants with typhoid, and Mexican immigrants with typhus.²⁹

²⁸ LA Times: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-02-03/coronavirus-outbreak-narrative-xenophobia>

²⁹ WBUR: <https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/04/14/george-takei-asian-american-discrimination-coronavirus>

Guidelines for Addressing Anti-AAPI Racism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Below are a few ways to address racist rhetoric, sentiments, and actions, as well as to increase awareness and understanding of the AAPI community and its experiences.

1. Become informed about AAPI experiences and history.

The current climate highlights the persistent stereotyping of the AAPI community as “perpetual foreigners” when in fact, Asian Americans *are* Americans. International events should not be falsely attributed to AAPIs. History has demonstrated the dangers of this racist ideology through the unjust internment of Americans of Japanese descent after Pearl Harbor. For more information, visit the following:

Public Broadcasting Service: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/the-long-history-of-racism-against-asian-americans-in-the-u-s>

Stand Against Hatred: <https://www.standagainsthared.org/stories>

2. Avoid mentions of Wuhan or China in communications related to COVID-19.

According to best practices determined by the World Health Organization, geographical locations should not be used in the virus’ name.³⁰ If you come across documents not in accordance with this guideline, refer the issuing entity to the WHO guidance.

3. Show solidarity and support for AAPI families, friends, colleagues, and communities.

Non-AAPIs are encouraged to reach out to their AAPI friends, colleagues, and neighbors, as experiences of racism can be especially isolating during the pandemic. In Illinois, child care providers are deemed essential workers: If there are early childhood colleagues who identify as AAPI, demonstrate care and support for the work that they are doing. In addition, individuals can publicly display solidarity with AAPIs by participating in the [#WashTheHate](#) campaign or by [posting signs](#).

For more information on how to be an ally to the AAPI community during the coronavirus pandemic, visit: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/asian-american-racism-coronavirus_n_5e71ca06c5b63c3b64870f25

4. Spread awareness and highlight stories about how the AAPI community is involved and contributing to efforts in overcoming the pandemic crisis.

As essential and frontline workers, over 2 million AAPIs are working in healthcare, transportation, and service industries in supporting communities during the pandemic.³¹ In addition, the Chicago-area Chinese American community mobilized to “provide critical supplies, including thousands of masks, along with message of gratitude” to frontline workers at UChicago Medicine.³²

5. Support local AAPI-owned businesses.

Asian American-owned businesses saw a customer decline as high as 80% prior to stay-at-home orders.³³ In a climate that is already very challenging, AAPI-owned businesses are especially in need of support.

³⁰ WHO: <https://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2015/naming-new-diseases/en/>

³¹ APALA: <https://www.apalanet.org/covid19.html>

³² Chicago Tribune: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-coronavirus-grassroots-efforts-chinese-community-20200403-f2z26kso6bcpxh5rpxjttub4m4-story.html>

³³ NBC News: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/how-help-struggling-asian-american-communities-amid-coronavirus-pandemic-n1178516>

6. Stop racist jokes about the coronavirus.

Racist jokes are never acceptable. Racist rhetoric has contributed to an increasingly hostile environment for AAPIs, inciting verbal and physical attacks and producing adverse effects on AAPIs' health and social and emotional well-being. If you witness someone making a racist joke, speak out. Consider asking neutral questions, such as "I don't understand. Why is that funny?"

7. Respond safely as a bystander to hostile or aggressive behavior.

If you witness an incident, consider intervening and/or providing support to the victim. According to [resources](#) developed by Asian Americans Advancing Justice and Hollaback!, effective tactics include³⁴ the following:

- **Distract.** Take an indirect approach to de-escalate the situation, such as starting an unrelated conversation with the victim, or finding another way to draw attention away from the victim.
- **Delegate.** Get help from someone else, such as another witness. If you are considering calling the police, first gain consent from the victim.
- **Document.** It can be helpful for the target to have a video recording of the incident. Check local laws about recording in public.
- **Delay.** After the incident is over, check in with the person who was targeted. Ask them how they are doing or if they are in need of anything.
- **Direct.** Assess your safety first before speaking up about the harassment in a firm and clear manner. For example, a bystander can state, "That's inappropriate, leave them alone."

For more detailed information, as well as free bystander intervention training, visit the following: <https://advancingjustice-aaajc.org/events>

8. Report incidents of discrimination and/or hate crimes.

If you are the victim or witness of an incident, file a report with the following entities:

- [Stop AAPI Hate](#) – Organized by A3PCON at the national level; reports are provided in multiple languages.
- Office of [Attorney General Kwame Raoul](#):
 - Visit: https://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights/Hate_Crime_Complaint_Form.pdf
 - Email: CivilRights@atg.state.il.us
 - Call the Civil Rights Hotline: 1-877-581-3692
- [Stand Against Hatred](#) - Organized by [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#), a national affiliation of organizations advocating for the civil and human rights of Asian Americans.

9. Share multilingual resources on COVID-19.

The AAPI community is incredibly diverse and composed of over 40 ethnicities. This means that there is a large need for COVID-19 related information and resources in multiple languages. The [Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum](#) has compiled resources on COVID-19 in multiple Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander languages that can be shared with communities:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XePaKv7Ar59PG7z37QqzIb8WfynEx5BK5ZfK3VLXIA/edit#gid=1512808134>

³⁴ This information is provided by Asian Americans Advancing Justice and Hollaback! virtual workshop on bystander intervention - <https://advancingjustice-aaajc.org/press-release/advancing-justice-aaajc-and-hollaback-provide-training-amid-covid-19-racist-attacks>

Tips for Parents and Caregivers: Countering COVID-19 Stigma and Racism

During stressful times, children look to their parents or caregivers on how to respond and understand what is going on during stressful events, such as the coronavirus crisis. It is important that adults model acceptance and compassion in their words and behaviors. It is also important that parents and caregivers be aware if their child is subjected to or engaging in anti-AAPI bullying related to the pandemic.

Tips for parents and caregivers³⁵:

- Model acceptance and compassion.
- Provide useful information in developmentally appropriate language (see below).
- Avoid stereotyping people or countries.
- Stop any type of harassment or bullying immediately.
- Discuss how it would feel to be blamed unfairly by association.
- Explore children’s fears.
- Emphasize positive, familiar images of diverse groups.
- Identify “heroes” of varying backgrounds involved in response to traumatic events.
- Undertake projects to help those in need with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Discuss historical instances of American intolerance.
- Learn about the diverse communities and faiths represented in your community.
- Read books with your children or students that address prejudice, tolerance, and hate.

For more detailed information on how to care and support your children during this time, visit the following: [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/countering-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-stigma-and-racism-tips-for-parents-and-caregivers](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/countering-covid-19-(coronavirus)-stigma-and-racism-tips-for-parents-and-caregivers).

Resources to explain the pandemic to your children in a developmentally appropriate way can be found at the following:

<https://socialstorycenter.com/social-stories/>

³⁵ National Association of School Psychologists: [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/countering-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-stigma-and-racism-tips-for-parents-and-caregivers](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/countering-covid-19-(coronavirus)-stigma-and-racism-tips-for-parents-and-caregivers)

Tips for Early Childhood Workers: Countering COVID-19 Stigma and Racism

The following guidelines can be applied to essential workers, early childhood care and education providers, home visiting programs, collaborations, networks, advocacy groups, policymakers, researchers, and others in the field of early childhood.

The [Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance](https://www.apalanet.org/) recommends the following steps to **protect essential workers and colleagues who identify as AAPI**³⁶:

- Emphasize and/or reiterate anti-discrimination workplace policies.
- Raise awareness about COVID-19 without increasing fear.
- Speak out against hostile and/or aggressive behavior.
- Stop outbreak-related jokes.
- Anticipate refusal of service against workers of AAPI descent.
- Publicly demonstrate solidarity with AAPI workers.
- Commit to an ongoing process to address discrimination.

For more detailed information and resources, visit the following:

- https://www.apalanet.org/uploads/8/3/2/0/83203568/aapi_covid-19_guidance.pdf
- <https://www.apalanet.org/covid19.html>

³⁶ Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance: https://www.apalanet.org/uploads/8/3/2/0/83203568/aapi_covid-19_guidance.pdf