# AVOIDING ASSUMPTION-MAKING & BIAS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

#### WHAT IS SOCIAL STIGMA?

- Social stigma is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics, or currently a specific disease
- During an outbreak, this may mean people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, and experience loss of status due to a perceived link with a disease
- The pandemic has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviors against people of certain ethnic backgrounds
- Confusion, anxiety, and fear among the public has fueled harmful stereotypes

### WORDS MATTER

- When talking about coronavirus disease, certain words and language may have a negative meaning for people and fuel stigmatizing attitudes
- Use a "people-first" language that empowers and respects people in all communication channels, including the media

### DO'S & DON'TS FOR LANGUAGE WHEN TALKING ABOUT COVID-19

- Do talk about the new coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Don't attach location or ethnicity such as saying "Wuhan Virus," "Chinese Virus," or "Asian Virus"
- Do talk about people "acquiring" or "contracting" COVID-19
- Don't talk about people "transmitting COVID-19", "infecting others", or "spreading the virus," assigns blame

#### DO YOUR PART AS AN INDIVIDUAL

- 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
- Do not make assumptions about someone's infectiousness based on their ethnicity, race, or national origin
- Spread the facts by acquiring sufficient knowledge about how COVID-19 is transmitted, treated, and prevent infection
- Link up with initiatives that address stereotyping and stigma to create a movement and positive environment that shows empathy for all

#### COMMUNICATION TIPS & MESSAGES

- Misinformation and rumors are spreading more rapidly than the current outbreak which contributes to stigmatization and discrimination of people
- We must have collective solidarity and actionable information that supports communities and people affected
- Correct misconception while also acknowledging people's feelings and behaviors as being very real
- Facts, not fear will stop the spread of the novel coronavirus
- Challenge myths and stereotypes
- Choose words carefully and the way you communicate



#### **COPING AS A VICTIM OF RACISM**

- Recognize that experiences of racism are real issues that take a toll and you are not being oversensitive
- Recognize the strength of your communities and reject attacks on your cultural values
- Hold together in solidarity, supporting one another can help utilize the strengths of your communities in the face of racism
- Connect to resources in your community

## SUPPORT THOSE FACING DISCRIMINATION BY...

- Call out racist comments and acts when you see them
- Interrupt racism by creating distance between the person making racist comments or actions and the victim
- Notice when you have engaged in actions that maintain discrimination and prejudice
- Offer support to individuals facing discrimination and ask permission to act on their behalf
- During COVID-19 Support Asian communities economically and socially, as well as other colored communities
- Everyone has a right to protect themselves and others with a face covering without being subject to discriminatory stereotypes and assumptions

## WHERE TO REPORT DISCRIMINATION

- Washington State Human Rights Commission https://www.hum.wa.gov/file-complaint
- King County Office of Civil Rights
  https://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equit
  y-social-justice/civil-rights.aspx
- Seattle Office for Civil Rights
  http://www.seattle.gov/civilrights/civilrights/outreach-and-engagement/report-bias

### 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 and language barriers
- Check your own stigmas and biases
- Support community with access to credible information
- Spread the facts

