



Project News

Culture Share: Combatting Stigma During COVID-19 Pandemic

Message from Washington State Center for Disease Control on combatting stigma during COVID-19 pandemic

The Center for Disease Control has shared the following information on its website about stigma and resilience. It is a good reminder to not only treat colleagues with respect but also those in our community who are affected by the virus.

Fear and anxiety about a disease can lead to social *stigma* toward people, places, or things. For example, stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate a disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk for the disease. Individuals who exhibit one or more of the symptoms of diseases like COVID-19 are at risk of stigma and discrimination. Stigma can also occur after a person has been released from COVID-19 quarantine even though they are not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others.

Some groups of people who may be experiencing stigma because of COVID-19 include the following:

- Persons of Asian descent
- People who have traveled
- Emergency responders or healthcare professionals.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating fear or anger toward other people.

Stigmatized groups may be subjected to:

- Social avoidance or rejection
- Denials of healthcare, education, housing, or employment

- Verbal assault
- Physical violence.

Stigma affects the emotional or *mental health* of stigmatized groups and the communities they live in. Stopping stigma is important to making communities and community members *resilient*. The Centers for Disease Control has published information on this topic. See [resources on mental health and coping during COVID-19](#).

For more information, see the [Coronavirus Stigma Fact Sheet](#).

As a reminder, WTP will not condone harassment, intimidation, retaliation or discrimination against individuals or groups. If you witness or experience any bias or harassment please report it to your Supervisor, Human Resources, Labor Relations, the Employee Concerns Program, or anyone in your management chain. Additionally, WTP employees who need more personal support during this time are encouraged to seek counseling services through their Employee Assistance Program (EAP).