



## Coronavirus Scare-Preventing Xenophobia in Early Childhood

Asian American children have been the targets of **bully and assault** since the coronavirus (now called COVID-19) outbreak due to fear and misinformation of the new virus. Asian American children, in various school districts, reported being teased as virus carriers when they displayed cold/flu-like symptoms such as coughs. As xenophobic incidents continue to occur at our schools and communities, educators should take on a proactive role to call out inappropriate and fundamentally racist behaviors.

Ivan Natividad, in his article, **Coronavirus: Fear of Asians Rooted in Long American History of Prejudicial Policies** of UC Berkeley described how anti-Asian xenophobia has contributed to decades of discriminatory and biased American public health and immigration policies.

As early childhood educators, we can help disrupt the xenophobic behaviors in our own communities and prevent this long history of racist behaviors from repeating itself. As there is much news on coronavirus on the media these days, young children may have seen unfamiliar and scary images such as people wearing protective masks or quarantine personnel in all white protective suits covered from head-to-toe.

As Dr. Jenny Yen suggested in her Chinese article, **Fighting Coronavirus: How to Share Family and Social Responsibilities With Young Children**, we can take this opportunity to validate the children's observations and questions and provide accurate knowledge about the epidemic in **developmentally appropriate** and **culturally responsive** ways.

Often times children and adults become fearful due to lack of proper knowledge or have misunderstandings about the actual facts of events of this nature. In the case of coronavirus, we can explain to young children the facts of the virus such as the origin of the virus, how it spreads, and how to do self-protection (e.g. washing hands).

As the coronavirus outbreak may continue for some time, educators and parents should be prepared to talk to their children about this epidemic. Encourage the children to ask questions and learn with them about the virus can teach them how to protect themselves. At the same time, we can continue to foster children's empathy, instead of hatred based on fear and ignorance through this learning opportunity.

Here are some resources we have found helpful for your reference:

1. Centers for Disease Control Prevention, Coronavirus Disease Prevention and Treatment
2. World Health Organization, Basic Protective Measures Against the New Coronavirus
3. National Public Radio, Must-Know Vocab For COVID-19: From Droplets To Zoonotic



NAEYC AIF Facilitators:  
Dr. Sandy Baba, Dr. Jenny Yen

