



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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Statement Against Discrimination in COVID-19 Response

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic and a national health emergency in the United States. COVID-19 is a serious and rapidly developing situation, affecting thousands of people worldwide. As the virus continues to extend beyond its origins in Wuhan, China, we all must practice and engage in a balanced, socially conscious, proactive, informed, and respectful behavior to all members of our community. It is the goal and mission of the Cultural Competence Committee to ensure this response and to promote the wellbeing and service access to all members of our community.

An individual's risk for contracting the illness is mainly based on where they, or someone they have had contact with, have traveled. Unfortunately, fear and anxiety can lead to social stigma and biases against certain racial and ethnic groups. Recently members of the Asian community, especially the Chinese community, have been subjected to discrimination and exclusion in Asia, Europe, Australia, and the United States. It is highly important to acknowledge that a person's race, ethnicity, language, cultural background or association is not a risk factor for contracting the disease or its spread.

This type of behavior and discrimination toward Chinese community members is unacceptable, harmful, and must not be tolerated. As seen previously throughout history, this is a common and unfortunate societal response to epidemics, and we must do better in our time and age to end the cycle of racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination. In this situation, stigma associated with the illness may prevent individuals come forward to seek help or ask questions, making it harder to fight the disease and protect the community's health as a whole.

Public Health authorities at the local, state, and national level are taking action to protect our community. Currently, the best way to prevent the spread of disease is to practice consistent hand washing, avoid close contact with people who are sick, cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others, cover coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect, maintain an appropriate 6-foot physical distance from others, and stay home if you or a household member are sick.

We urge everyone to work together with compassion, unity, and inclusion in this stressful time. Let's support each other and maintain a level of cultural awareness and knowledge consistent with the values of our community. We are all in this together.

**Cultural Competence Committee
Behavioral Health Department – Health Agency
County of San Luis Obispo**

The Health Agency complies with Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex or any other protected class

County of San Luis Obispo Health Agency

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