



THE OFFICIAL NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

# AAP News

## AAP leaders speak out on racism against Asian American, Pacific Islander children

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor



AAP leaders are speaking out against racism targeting people who are Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and urging pediatricians to take action.

The AAP Board of Directors Executive Committee and Board Committee on Equity penned the perspective piece "[Immunizing Against Hate: Overcoming Asian American and Pacific Islander Racism](#)," which was published today in *Pediatrics* and lays out members' concerns about the toll racism is taking on children and their families.

"Addressing the pervasive and harmful impact of structural and interpersonal racism on child health is at the heart of the AAP's Equity Agenda, the goal of which is to assure equitable systems of care that promote optimal health for all children," said Wendy S. Davis, M.D., FAAP, chair of the Board Committee on Equity. "As we followed the news and heard from our Asian American members about their own suffering and that of their patients, remaining silent was simply not an option. This statement evolved as we sought multiple channels through which we could support our colleagues and the children and families in our care."

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, then-AAP President Sara "Sally" H. Goza, M.D., FAAP, warned about the threat of Asian American racism. Those fears have been borne out over the past year with surging rates of discrimination.

Hate crimes against Asian Americans rose nearly 150% in 2020, according to a [study of police department statistics from 16 U.S. cities](#). Stop AAPI Hate has documented [nearly 3,800 instances of discrimination](#) against people of AAPI descent since March 2020, including verbal harassment, physical assault and online harassment.

In addition to enduring racism during the pandemic, people who are Asian, Black and other minority ethnicities



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are at greater risk of becoming severely ill from COVID-19.

"The alarming statistics and the trauma behind them illustrate that America is again waging a battle against two pandemics: COVID-19 and racism," AAP board members wrote.

Pediatricians have seen the impacts of this racism firsthand.

"Our Asian American patients tell us that they are afraid to walk or ride the bus to school, go to church, or play outside, as they, too, have been targets of taunts and harassment," the AAP board wrote. "But even staying inside the home does not protect them. Many children say they have experienced cyberbullying or feel shunned and anxious because of hateful, racist language online."

Racism is a social determinant of health that can take a significant, long-lasting toll on children physically and emotionally. The AAP detailed these consequences in its 2019 policy *The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health* and urged pediatricians to address racism in their practices and communities.

AAP leaders are renewing their push for pediatricians to examine their own biases and be prepared to care for Asian American families experiencing discrimination.

"And we echo and re-emphasize the urgency of Dr. Goza's call not only to vaccinate children against COVID-19 but also to strengthen our children's immunity to the virus of hate," they wrote. "The AAP's commitment to dismantling racism has been and will continue to be, at the forefront of our highest priorities."