



Doing our part to reduce stigma of COVID-19

The pandemic has caused a huge amount of stress on all of us – within our families, in our workplaces, and in our communities. While we are hopeful a return to ‘normal’ will be coming soon, the pandemic is not yet over and we must all remain focused on limiting the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating the harm it can cause to our health, including our mental health well-being.

COVID-19 Stigma: threat to our health

Unfortunately, throughout the pandemic, many people have been experiencing social stigma, exclusion, discrimination, and mental health issues. Lack of understanding about COVID-19 has sparked feelings of fear, anger, and other unfair treatment against people who have contracted or have symptoms of COVID-19.

Stigma and discrimination are known barriers that prevent people from getting tested or accessing the care, treatment and support they need.

In our schools and workplaces this harm can mean:

- Exposing workers to high levels of guilt and stress
- Creating divisions in our workplaces and in our union
- Causing people to delay or avoid health services
- Making it harder to monitor, stop or slow outbreaks, and impede contact tracing
- Discouraging people from being tested

Stigma and discrimination may also discourage workers from reporting COVID-19 cases to WorkSafeBC.

CUPE members in K-12 and early learning are strongly encouraged to [file a WorkSafeBC claim](#) in any and all instances where they have reason to believe they contracted COVID-19 while at work (*more information on why reporting is so important was covered in our [April 30 bulletin](#)*).

Spreading rumors and perpetuating the stigma around COVID-19 can be harmful to you, your fellow workers, and the solidarity of our union.

We can all do our part to reduce stigma around COVID-19!

- **Be careful of the language you use** to describe COVID-19 or someone who has the virus
- **Stay focused on positives**, such as the steps being taken to contain COVID-19 and the preventative steps we are all taking to keep safe
- **Raise awareness** by sharing messages based on facts, and correct any misconceptions that people believe or have spread
- **Respect privacy**. There is no need to tell others if someone you know is infected or you suspect are infected
- **Show support, kindness and empathy** to those who have, or are tested for, COVID-19

More resources on battling COVID-19 based stigma and discrimination can be found at bcschools.cupe.ca.