



August 6, 2020

Dear Say Yes Buffalo Families,

Say Yes Buffalo remains committed to making sure the families and youth we serve continue to be updated on the measures being taken to protect the health and safety of our clients, staff, volunteers, and family members as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to impact the work we do.

Since schools closed in March of 2020 and went to remote learning, our team has continuously followed the guidance provided by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), and the Erie County Department of Health and the New York State Education Department. Regular updates on COVID-19 can be obtained on the NYS Department of Health website at [www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/).

While the Say Yes Buffalo main office remains closed during this time, all of our departments are active and working remotely. Our team has been taking precautions whenever they are in the field such as wearing personal protective equipment (masks, gloves), frequent handwashing, use of hand sanitizer, and safe social distancing.

If we should become aware that a client or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, we will immediately notify appropriate staff and parents/guardians. If you or a family member begin showing symptoms of a respiratory disease and suspect it may be COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider **immediately** (and prior to going to their office) for guidance.

This continues to be an evolving situation, so we encourage you to keep up-to-date about COVID-19—its symptoms, transmission, treatment, and prevention—by visiting the following websites:

- CDC's dedicated COVID-19 website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nCoV>
- Erie County Department of Health: <http://www2.erie.gov/health/coronavirus>
- New York State hotline for testing and information: 1-888-364-3065

Please refer to the attached letter from Child and Family Services' Chief Operating Officer, Linda McCartan, for an updated list of COVID-19 symptoms and recommendations on preventing sickness and the spread of COVID-19.

Please know the health and safety of our clients and staff is our highest priority. We will remain vigilant in our efforts to help prevent the spread of this illness, and are at the ready to help at every stage.

Sincerely,

Say Yes Buffalo School-Based Services Team



July 27, 2020

Dear Child & Family Services' Clients,

During these challenging times, we all share in the same concerns with the developing Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. As the new Chief Operating Officer, I want to ensure you our primary focus is the health and safety of our clients and staff in order to continue providing quality services, uninterrupted, to the entire community.

We routinely monitor the spread of COVID-19, especially its impact on our local community. We will continue to comply with the regulations and guidance provided by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), the Erie County Department of Health and the New York State Education Department. You can check for the latest updates on the NYS Department of Health or CDC websites at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home> or <https://www.cdc.gov/>.

Child & Family Services has implemented a COVID-19 response plan and infrastructure that contains all required safety measures, cleaning and sanitizing protocols and social distancing guidelines so we can open up all of our buildings and serve clients safely. In addition, we are grateful to have all the tools needed to communicate and work virtually and provide services through telephonic and web-based programs for those who are unable to come to the Agency.

According to the CDC, below are some of the symptoms to watch for related to COVID-19. Please note these are only some of the symptoms people have experienced.

Symptoms to watch for related to COVID-19.

\*These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- New loss of taste or smell
- Headaches
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting

The CDC also has a number of recommendations to help prevent getting sick and reduce the spread of COVID-19. These are:

- Wash your hands often.

- Avoid close contact – If possible, maintain six feet of distance between yourself and people who don't live in your household.
- Cover your mouth and nose with cloth face cover when around others.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.
- Monitor your healthy daily.

If you are in need of a COVID-19 testing site, you can call the NYS hotline at 1-888-364-3065. All NYS COVID-19 testing is free of charge.

Before traveling, make sure you have the latest information on areas where COVID-19 is spreading. You can find this at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>. If you are scheduled to travel to such a location for work, please assess other alternative arrangements, such as video conferencing, in advance.

Our number one priority is the health and well-being of our clients and staff. We are constantly working to keep everyone safe while continuing to provide you the services you need.

Sincerely,

Linda McCartan  
Chief Operating Officer

## **Fresh Food/Pantry Options**

### **Massachusetts Ave. Project Accepts Cash, Credit, SNAP**

August Schedule:

Tue. 8/4, 8/11, 8/18, 8/25 @ Bailey Ave. & Dartmouth (Next to the Fire Hall) 3:00pm-5:00pm

Wed. 8/5, 8/12, 8/19, 8/26 @ Elim Christian Fellowship 70 Chalmers Ave. 14214 4:00pm- 6:00pm

Thurs. 8/6, 8/13, 8/20, 8/27 @ Hispanics United 254 Virginia Ave. 14201 11:00am-1:00pm

Thurs. 8/6, 8/13, 8/20, 8/27 @ 387 Massachusetts Ave. 14213 3:00pm-6:00pm

Friday 8/7, 8/14, 8/21, 8/28 @ Veteran's One Stop Center 1280 Main St. 14209 10:00 am- 11:00am

### **Food Bank Mobile Pantry – No income documentation needed- No cost**

#### **Kleinhans Music Hall 3 Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201**

Second Monday of the month, 1:30pm-3:30pm except in November and December. Closed on holidays.

#### **St Luke AME Zion Church 314 East Ferry Street, Buffalo, NY 14208**

Second Monday of the month, 10:30am-12:30pm Except September, November and December. Closed Holidays

#### **Resurrection Lutheran Church Food Pantry 3 Doat Street, Buffalo, NY 14211**

Third Friday of the month, 10:30am-12:30pm except in November and December. Closed on holidays

#### **Journey's End via Good Shepherd Food Pantry 36 Brewster Street, Buffalo, NY 14214**

Second Wednesday of the month, 1:30pm-3:30pm. Available April thru October, Closed on holidays.

#### **Catholic Charities Lackawanna Pantry 75 Caldwell Place, Buffalo, NY 14218**

Second Friday of the month, 11am-1pm except in November and December. Closed on holidays.

#### **New Covenant Tabernacle Food Pantry 345 McConkey Drive, Buffalo, NY 14223**

Fourth Tuesday of the month, 10:30am-12:30pm except in November and December. Closed on holidays

#### **Citizens Community Development Corporation 134 William St., Buffalo, NY 14204**

Fourth Thursday of the month, 10am-12 noon.

### **Local Farmer's Market (cost associated, \*Note 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays are "pay as you can"\*)**

#### **Gates Vascular Institute Bi-weekly Farmers Market (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays)**

875 Ellicott St #1034, Buffalo, NY 14203

2:30-7:00pm

August 6 & 19 (Third Thursday, pay as you can)



## Local Pantry Listing accepting City of Buffalo residents or residents of Erie County

*All sites require proof of residency (utility bill, lease, landlord statement), Picture ID for the person picking up the food (NYS ID or License, Benefit card with picture), ID for all members of the household (Birth certificate, social security card, Benefit card), proof of income, (budget sheet, benefit sheet, WIC information, pay stub, W-2, SSI/SSD letter with amount listed) unless otherwise noted.*

Response to Love 145 Rother Avenue Buffalo, NY 14212 Main Phone 716-894-7030  Intake Office 716-894-7030 x127	Monday-Thursday 9am-11:30am.	Serves City of Buffalo Food distributed outside
Urban Christian Ministries 967 Jefferson Ave. 14204 Nicole Shearer, Pantry Coordinator 716-882-9472	Tuesday 11am-2pm Thursday 11am-4pm. Friday 11am-2pm	No residency requirements at this time
Citizens Community Development Corporation 134 William St. 14204 <b>Marie Brown</b> 716-852-2324	Community Food Pantry: Wednesdays, 9am-4pm.  Mobile Pantry: Fourth Thursday of the month, 10am-12 noon.	14202, 14203, 14204, 14206, 14210, 14211, and 14212 *but will serve anyone who has a referral, regardless of residency.
1 Lafayette Sq. Under the Central Library  Will Marcy (Primary) willmarcy@herodata.com 716-523-1425	4th Saturday of the month 12 pm-1pm	Food, clothing distribution
Network of Religious Communities Food Pantry 1272 Delaware Ave 14209  716-882-7705	Tuesday 10am-2pm Wednesday 2pm-5:30pm	Need Proof of income and household size Serves all of Erie Co.
Salvation Army 960 Main St, Buffalo, NY 14202  (716)883-9800	Monday, Wednesday, & Friday 9 am- 1 pm	Come to front door and get bags of based on family size, no paperwork needed

# Say Yes Buffalo Family Resource Guide: COVID-19 Update

## HOUSING/RENTAL ASSISTANCE

**Belmont Housing Resources for WNY** - This non-profit agency can provide information on rental assistance programs, and they also administer the Section 8 rental assistance program. (716) 884-7791

**Matt Urban HOPE Center** - People facing an eviction and at risk of losing their home or apartment, or those who are currently homeless, can contact this agency. Dial (716) 855-2124.

**HEAP- Home Energy Assistance Program**- See below for instructions. HEAP is a program for families to assist with utility bills their homes.

**ECDSS Emergency Services**- Emergency Services, 460 Main St, 2nd floor, may assist you with a Security Agreement if you cannot afford to pay a cash security deposit, and you must move due to a critical reason, including medical disability, health department order, moving from temporary to permanent housing, a significant cost savings over 2 years, or an adverse living situation affecting your family's mental or physical health, which requires relocation.

*\*For a list of emergency shelters, see list on last page*

## IMMEDIATE NEEDS/CRISIS SUPPORT LINES

The **Family Help Line** is available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week at 892-2172. Frustrated parents and caregivers can contact the help line for any reason and speak to a listener on the other end, who will try to help navigate frustrations. Callers are assured that they may remain anonymous – FHL goal is to provide information that will help address whatever it was that initiated the call – providing services that provide immediate response to their needs – no waiting list, no fee.

**EPIC (Every Person Influences Children)** has a Parent Support Line at 332-4111 available weekdays between 8:30am and 4:30pm. Parents are welcome to call in for help with stress management, establishing homeschool routines, positive discipline strategies and any issues that arise while being home with their children.

**Crisis Services** 24-hour Crisis Helpline 834-3131; 24-hour Addictions Hotline 831-7007; 24-hour Domestic Violence helpline 862-HELP; Kids Helpline 834-1144.

**The Family Justice Center (FJC)** online chat-box (<https://www.fjcsafe.org/>) or FJC SafeLine at (716) 558-SAFE (7233). (Short description on services offered)

## ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (ECDSS) OPERATIONS

### Temporary Assistance:

- Download LDSS-2921 Temporary Assistance application forms from the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance web site: <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/applications/2921.pdf>
- Complete an online form to request an application be mailed out: <http://www2.erie.gov/temporaryassistance/application-request-form>.
- Call 858-8000 to request an application be mailed out.
- *Mobile Document App also available- see below*
- Applications available in the lobby of 158 Pearl Street (as a last resort)

Completed application forms should be mailed to:

ECDSS - TA  
PO Box 120  
Buffalo, NY 14201-9903

- Eligibility interviews are now being conducted over the phone so it is essential that all applicants include a current working phone number with their application.
- The certification periods for Temporary Assistance (TA)/Medicaid (MA) cases with certification periods expiring at the end of March, April, May and June 2020 have been extended for six months.

### SNAP (Food Stamps):

- Applications for SNAP can be completed online at: [www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov).
- Applications for SNAP can also be mailed by calling 858-7239.
- The re-certification periods for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cases with certification periods expiring at the end of March, April, May, and June 2020 have been extended for six months.
- A Pandemic EBT (food stamp) benefit has been announced for households with students who would usually receive free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Act, if not for a school closure. These temporary food benefits are to help cover the cost of meals children would otherwise would have received at school. No action is required for eligible families to receive this benefit. More information about the Pandemic-EBT can be obtained by calling P-EBT Food Benefits Helpline: 1-833-452-0096.
- *Mobile Document App also available- see below*



**ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (ECDSS) OPERATIONS**  
**(Continued)**

**Day Care Assistance:**

- Applications for day care assistance are available online: <http://www2.erie.gov/socialservices/index.php?q=daycare>
- Day Care Assistance has been expanded to allow families making up to 85% of the state median income (see chart) to qualify for assistance.

Family Size	85% SMI NY (FFY 2020)	200% FPL (6/1/19- 5/31/20)	85% SMI NY / 100% FPL	275% FPL 6/1/19- 5/31/20)
1	\$42,405	\$24,980	340%	\$34,348
2	\$55,453	\$33,820	328%	\$46,503
3	\$68,501	\$42,660	321%	\$58,658
4	\$81,549	\$51,500	317%	\$70,813
5	\$94,597	\$60,340	314%	\$82,968
6	\$107,645	\$69,180	311%	\$95,123
7	\$110,091	\$78,020	282%	\$107,278
8	\$112,538	\$86,860	259%	\$119,433
<b>Each additional Person</b>		<b>add \$8,840</b>		

The Workforce Development Institute's (WDI) Child Care Facilitated Enrollment program will accept new applications in the range of 201% of FPL up to 85% of SMI. Eligible families can be emailed an application by completing the WDI online prescreen here: <https://forms.gle/FSgMcpfbTZmDrhRF8>

**Comprehensive Employment Division:**

Employment work requirements related to TA and SNAP cases were suspended effective Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

**HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program):**

To apply for HEAP, please use one of the following options:

Telephone: (716) 858-7644

*Mobile Document App (see below)*

Fax: (716) 858-6765

Online: [www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov)

Mail-Applications can be printed from [www.erie.gov/heap](http://www.erie.gov/heap) and mailed to:

HEAP

PO Box 120

Buffalo, NY 14201-9903



**ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (ECDSS) OPERATIONS**  
**(Continued)**

**Mobile Document Upload App- Temporary Assistance, SNAP, Medicaid, HEAP**

You can now use a Mobile App to upload documents to ECDSS for services using an Apple or Android device. To download the NYDocSubmit app, users should search the Apple App Store or Google Play Store for “NYDocSubmit” and click on “Get” or “Install.” In order to use the app, clients will need to have a NY.gov ID. Clients who need to establish a NY.gov ID at <https://my.ny.gov>

**Emergency Services:**

Homelessness: If you have nowhere safe to stay, the Homeless Team, located at 158 Pearl Street, 1st floor, may be able to place you in a shelter, hotel, or motel during normal business hours. After 5:00 pm, you may call 211 WNY, at 1-888-696-9211. They can help you find safe shelter for the night, and then have you follow up with the Homeless Team the following business day.

Eviction, Utility bills, Moving Assistance & Security Deposit: Emergency Services, 460 Main St, 2nd floor, may assist you with a one-time payment of shelter arrears if you have fallen behind on your rent and your landlord has threatened to evict you if you do not pay. Emergency Services may also assist with utility bills, moving assistance (one-time), and storage unit payment (one-time). See website for more details: [www.erie.gov/EmergencyTA](http://www.erie.gov/EmergencyTA).

Extermination: 460 Main St, 2nd floor, may provide one-time payments for extermination inspection and/or treatment, unless you receive Section 8 or have a rodent problem. If you have rodent issues (ex- rats), you can contact the Erie County Department of Health’s Rodent Control Program at 716-961-6800.

Appliances/Household Grants: 460 Main St, 2nd floor, may assist you with a one-time payment to purchase essential household furniture/supplies, if: (1) a qualifying condition exists and (2) you do not receive ongoing Temporary Assistance or cash benefits. If you receive TA, you should apply with your worker directly. If you don’t have your worker’s phone number, you can call 716-858-8000 for more information.

*Full service overview and directions can be found at: [www.erie.gov/EmergencyTA](http://www.erie.gov/EmergencyTA).*

**Adult Protective Services:**

Any concerned person, family member, friend, neighbor, law enforcement officer, health professional, clergy or financial institution employee who observes an individual having difficulty in providing for their most basic needs; such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or personal safety are urged to call Adult Services at 716-858-6877 to inquire about making a referral.

## **ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (ECDSS) OPERATIONS (Continued)**

### **Child Welfare:**

Concerns about the safety of any child in our community may be reported to the Statewide Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect at 1-800-342-3720. If an individual believes that a child is at imminent risk of harm, the call should be directed to 911.

### **Domestic Violence Resources:**

Help is available to Erie County residents experiencing domestic violence. DV advocates continue to provide safety planning, medical assistance, court advocacy/support, assistance pressing criminal charges and obtaining an order of protection, and shelter assistance. Advocates and medical professionals with expertise in injuries associated with domestic violence continue to respond to hospitals to offer support and help.

Advocates are working creatively with victims to help them stay safe and - if asked - to help them escape their homes/abuse safely. Hotlines are not only for victims. If you know someone experiencing violence, please call to speak with an advocate about how to assist that person safely.

Haven House, Erie County's only licensed DV shelter, is open and continues to accept new clients in need of a safe place to go when fleeing their domestic violence situation. Precautions are being taken to ensure that shelter residents are not only protected not only from abuse but also from contracting COVID-19. Haven House has launched a 24/7 chat hotline for survivors at <https://cfsbny.org/our-services/hh/hh-chat/>.

If you are a victim or know someone who is, please call the following numbers for confidential support.

- New York State 24/7 DV Hotline – 1.800.942.6906
- Haven House 24/7 Hotline – 716.884.6000
- Erie County DV Hotline- 716.862.4357
- National DV Hotline (24/7 live chat feature) - [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)
- CRISIS Services- 716.834.3131

Mental Health Emergency & Suicide  
Prevention Hotline:

**Crisis Services 834-3131**

KIDS HELPLINE  
834-1144

For Children & Teens:

**Spectrum CARES 882-4357**

*For Information about Health and  
Human Services in WNY...*

**Dial 211**

<http://www.211wny.org/Erie-County>

**Emergency Shelters:**

Cornerstone Manor 852-0761  
Haven House (DV) 884-6000  
Salvation Army 883-9800  
Little Portion Friary 882-5705  
Safe House (CCDD) 883-8002  
Compass House 886-0935

**Food:** Food Bank 852-1305  
Angel Food 822-7925

**WIC**

(Women's, Infants & Children's  
Supplemental Food Program)

**Catholic Charities**

**446-1227**

**Housing Subsidy/Assistance**

Belmont Shelter 884-7791  
Rental Asst. Center 882-0063  
BMHA 855-6774  
Housing Options (MH) 1-800-421-1114

**Career Counseling/Job Search**

Buffalo Employment & Training Center  
856-5627  
Everywoman Opportunity Centers:  
Buffalo 847-1120

**Medical Services for Adults:**

Kaleida OB/GYN 859-BABY  
Erie County Medical Ctr 898-3152  
UBMD OB/GYN 242-8327  
Cleve-Hill 831-8613  
Northwest CHC 875-2904

**Erie County Protective Services:**

- Children 858-8705
- Adults (18+ yrs) 858-6877

**Senior Services**

(age 60+) 858-8526

**Parenting Classes:**

Catholic Charities 856-4494  
-Adult and teen parenting  
Common Sense Parenting 674-9730  
(ext.4148)  
Culturally Sensitive Parenting  
896-0522  
EPIC 332-4154  
-Teen parenting 332-4193  
Salvation Army 883-9800



**Erie County Department  
Of Social Services**

***Clinical Specialists  
Office***

**GENERAL SERVICES  
RESOURCE  
LIST**

Rev. 3/14 CL

Mental Health Emergency & Suicide  
Prevention Hotline:

**Crisis Services 834-3131**

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Buffalo Employment & Training Center	856-5627
Everywoman Opportunity Centers:	
Buffalo	847-1120

**Medical Services for Adults:**

Kaleida	OB/GYN	859-BABY
Erie County	Medical Ctr	898-3152
UBMD	OB/GYN	242-8327
Cleve-Hill		831-8613
Northwest CHC		875-2904

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EPIC	332-4154
-Teen parenting	332-4193
Salvation Army	883-9800



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**GENERAL SERVICES  
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Rev. 3/14 CL



## LET'S GET WATER WISE

Pathways to Affordable Water (PAW) is an initiative of Buffalo's Water Equity Taskforce, whose mission is to protect public health, improve and maintain the water system, and provide affordable water services.

Together, we're working to make water bills more affordable for everyone in Buffalo through financial assistance, education and conservation to lower their regular water bill payments all year.

### PROGRAM BENEFITS:

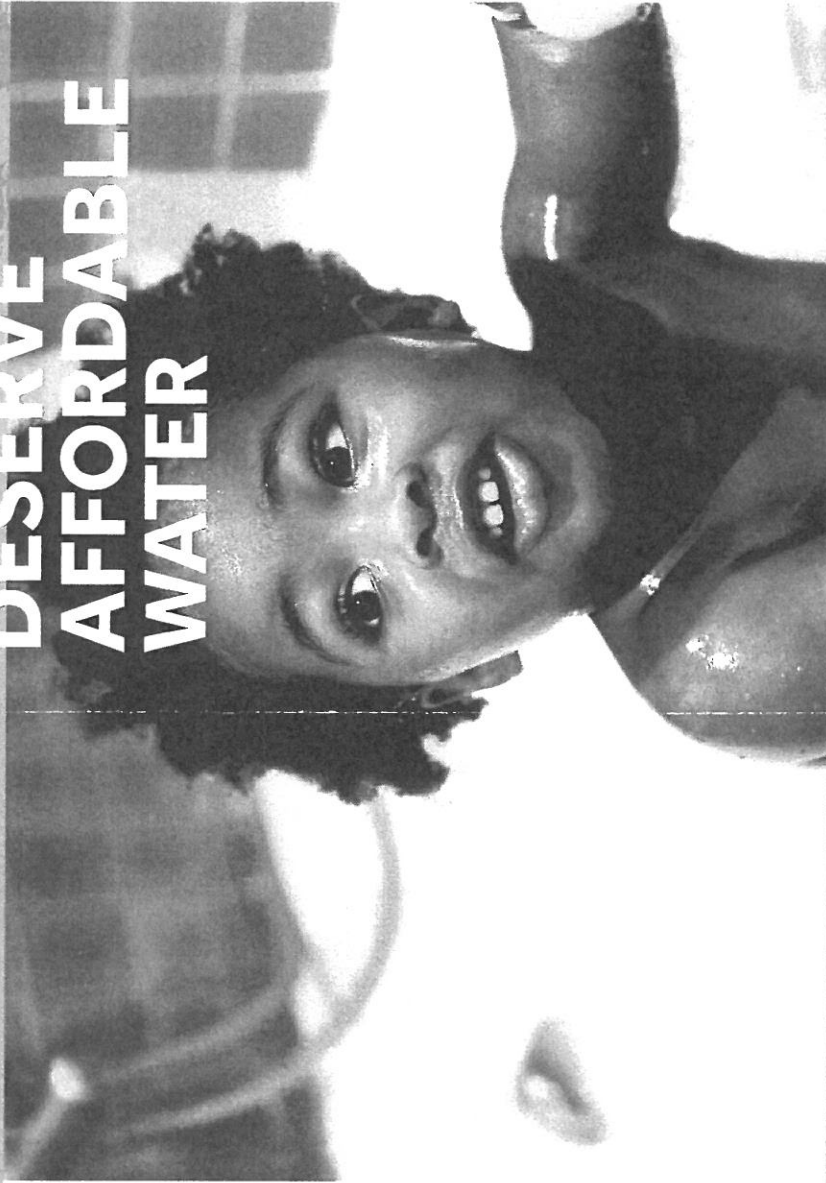
Eligible Buffalo residents can receive a discount on their water bill between 20% - 60% a year.

### PARTICIPANT QUALIFICATIONS:

- Must be a City of Buffalo resident
- Must reside at the property on the account
- Must provide proof of income and residency

getwaterwisebuffalo.org

# WE ALL DESERVE AFFORDABLE WATER



**BUFFALO**  
SEWER AUTHORITY

**BUFFALO**  
WATER

**CATHOLIC**  
CHARITIES

**Community Foundation**  
for Greater Buffalo

**GROUNDWORK**  
Buffalo

**at the PUSH**  
BUFFALO  
FOR AFFORDABLE WATER

Let's Get Water Wise is an initiative of  
Buffalo's Water Equity Taskforce

(716) 847-1065  
getwaterwisebuffalo.org

A City of Buffalo  
Water Initiative

A City of Buffalo  
Water Initiative

# LET'S GET WATER WISE



### APPLY IN 10 MINUTES

Eligibility is determined by income and household size.



### VERIFY DOCUMENTS

You'll need documents to verify your income and residency.



### GET A DISCOUNT ON WATER

If you're approved, you'll receive a discount on your next water bill.

#### ELIGIBILITY:

Eligibility is based on household income relative to federal low-income guidelines. If a household contains a member who receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Public Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, sometimes referred to as Food Stamps), or Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) benefits, the household is considered automatically eligible for the Residential Affordable Water Program.

Household income eligibility for Residential Affordable Water Program as of 2019:

Family Size	Max Income
1	\$41,850
2	\$47,800
3	\$53,800
4	\$59,750
5	\$64,450
6	\$69,350
7	\$74,100
8	\$78,800

#### OTHER WAYS TO SAVE:

Along with discounts on your water bill, there are additional measures to lower water costs and provide further financial relief. Many options could provide added assistance during our currently unfolding economic uncertainties. Make sure you're taking advantage of every available opportunity, including:

- Low Income Senior Citizen Discount (must be 65 years of age)
- Monthly Payment Plans
- Extended Repayment Periods
- Interest Charge Suspension
- Monthly Billing Option
- Leak Abatement Program

#### WATER AMNESTY PROGRAM:

In a partnership with the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Water is now offering a Water Amnesty Program from July through December of 2020. The program will cover forgiveness of any costs associated with the following:

- Interest penalty associated with balance
- Turn on/turn off fees
- Burst meter charge (if necessary)

We're utilizing financial assistance to lower water bills for eligible residents of the City of Buffalo—and we want everyone to know about it.

#### HOW TO APPLY:

To learn more about the Get Water Wise Buffalo campaign and the Pathways to Affordable Water program, visit [getwaterwisebuffalo.org](http://getwaterwisebuffalo.org), and let's get water wise together.





## **Guide for Parents/Caregivers & Teachers: Conversations and Teaching on Racism & Cultural Awareness**

### **Grades PK-5**

Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice, by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, & Ann Hazzard \*Recommended by BPS Office of Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Initiatives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcOhOFGcWm8>

A Kid's Book About Racism, by Jelani Memory

Online Book Reading: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaltG5N8nE>

#### **For Parents/Caregivers & Teachers of young children:**

*How I Teach Kids About Racism (Kindergarten and 1st Grade)* by Naomi O'Brien

Video on ways to approach racism with young children:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbnkwbbHXFo>

### **Materials Attached:**

**Grades 5-7:** Lesson Plan for parents/caregivers and/or teachers: Experiences with Race and Racism, supplemental materials: *First Encounters with Racism* (multiple stories for reference)

**All Ages:** *Talking with Children about Race*, blog by Danielle Galenski, SYB Early Childhood Supervisor #HomeGrown, supplemental materials: Calm Down Posters (English & Spanish)

**Youth Pages:** Empathy, Diversity & Restorative Justice

### **Cultural Excursions/Family Trips & Virtual Tours:**

- Ideal for Grades K-12: Broderick Park- 1170 Niagara St., Buffalo NY 14213
- Ideal for Grades K-12: The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center- 825 Depot Ave W, Niagara Falls NY 14305
- Ideal for Grades K-12: The Seneca National Museum- 82 W Hetzel St, Salamanca NY 14779
- Ideal for Grades 4-12: Michigan Street Corridor 111 Genesee St Buffalo NY 14203
- Ideal for Grades 4-12: The Harriet Tubman House 180 South St. Auburn NY 13021
- Ideal for Grades 7-12: Forest Lawn History Walk 1411 Delaware Ave Buffalo NY 14209
- Ideal for Grades 7-12: National Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture (Washington, DC)
- Ideal for Grades 9-12: National Memorial for Peace and Justice (Montgomery, Alabama)
- Ideal for Grades 9-12: Puerto Rico Excursion



Today, it's impossible for me to write about anything other than the racial and social injustices that our nation and city of Buffalo are currently facing. With the recent tragic murders of three Black individuals and the subsequent protests and riots that are taking place, more than likely, you and your family have been affected in one way or another.

As we continue to deal with social distancing and home-schooling, many children have access to the internet more than they may have had before. Even young children may see or hear about highly publicized incidents like the George Floyd case—perhaps overhearing the TV or the radio—and may ask questions. Or like myself, if parents are upset by the news, your children will most likely notice their parent's distress and ask why mom or dad is upset. In either case, an age-appropriate explanation is better than silence. Initiating an age-appropriate conversation can give children a helpful framework for understanding these difficult realities. It can also help them to process and cope with strong feelings.

One thing to know right off the bat is that it's OK to be scared to have these conversations, it's ok to not know exactly what to say and it's important to remember that you may not have all the answers and that is ok too.

In situations like these, the **FIRST** thing is to take care of yourself as a parent. Think about how on an airplane you're instructed to put your oxygen mask on first before putting your child's on; it's a good reminder that the better we take care of ourselves, the better we will be able to take care of our children. Every parent is different. What do you do to take care of yourself?

**SECOND**, when it comes to having a conversation with your child, the place I always start with is by asking my children what they already know or what they've heard. This is helpful so that you can alter your conversation based on their understanding, thoughts and feelings.

**THIRD**, for younger children, conversations about racism should be limited to basic facts about how people are treated differently due to the color of their skin. It is also important to acknowledge that not everyone treats people differently based on race. For example, many police officers become police officers because they want to help people. And there are times when we would really want a police officer to help us—give some examples— if there's been a car accident, or if someone took something that belonged to us, etc. But sometimes a police officer does something bad. When that happens, we might start to think that all police officers are like that. I would suggest that you don't show your children any of the videos that have surfaced, as it may increase trauma and nightmares.

For older teens, parents can consider exposure to news or social media posts as discussion points about this issue.

**FOURTH**, acknowledge your own feelings as an adult and acknowledge your children's feelings. Parents may have similar feelings. Share your hurt, anger, or disappointment with your child. You may say something like, "I know it's upsetting to hear about and see these things happening all around us. It upsets me too when bad things like this happen. Racism is very unfair."



**FIFTH**, talk with your child about coping mechanisms. What has worked for them before (to calm down) when they've had strong feelings. What are some new things that they can try? Create a list possibly or a space in your home where your child can go when they need to calm down. You may put coloring books, sensory toys, books, etc. in this area for them. Take a look at this infographic with more ways to help your child handle strong emotions.

[https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Calm-Down\\_Poster\\_EN.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Calm-Down_Poster_EN.pdf)

[https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Calm-Down\\_Poster\\_SP.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Calm-Down_Poster_SP.pdf)

**SIXTH**, take a few minutes to talk about the fact that there are a lot of people out there that want things to change. Being able to offer specific examples of community change agents would be useful. For example, all the people who came to downtown Buffalo to volunteer after the protest to help clean up our city. Being able to talk about what family members are doing to speak up against injustice is also useful. Actions always speak louder than words. I spoke to my children about my participation in peaceful protests, donating money to local organizations and joining organizations such as SURJ (Standing Up for Racial Justice).

**FINALLY**, take time to hug and love your children. Give them the freedom to express themselves. Ask them if there is anything they would like to do to contribute to anti-racist work and conversations. These times are incredibly difficult for adults. Sometimes children have it even harder because they feel even less control in the situation. Work together as a family unit and support one another.

Check out these links below with more ways to talk to your children about protests and racism, as well as books to support conversations on race/racism/resistance.

As mentioned in the article below, "We need to engage our children in a conversation about racism and use these events as a catalyst. While it is upsetting to watch, we need to sit with that discomfort and teach our families how to channel that energy to work to dismantle the racist structures that exist in our communities." Radesky said.

I am wishing you all my love and support. Please take care of yourself the best you can during these challenging times. We see you, we hear you and we support you.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/01/health/protests-racism-talk-to-children-wellness/index.html>

<https://www.embracerace.org/resources/26-childrens-books-to-support-conversations-on-race-racism-resistance>



# Help Us Calm Down

Strategies for Children

Try these strategies with your child! The more you use a calming strategy and practice the strategy with your child, the more likely they are to use the strategy when experiencing anger, stress, sadness, or frustration.

## I can...



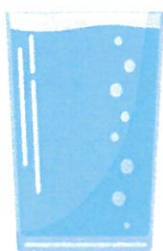
take deep breaths



count



go for a walk



take a drink



take a break



listen to music



draw a picture



swing



rock



read a book



hug a favorite toy



do a puzzle





# Ayúdanos a estar Calmados

Estrategias para niños

¡Pruebe estas estrategias con su hijo! Cuanto más use una estrategia relajante y practique la estrategia con su hijo, más probable será que la use cuando experimente enojo, estrés, tristeza o frustración.

## Yo puedo...



respirar  
profundamente



tomar una bebida



contar



tomar un descanso



caminar



escuchar música



hacer un dibujo



columpiar



mecerme



leer un libro



abrazar mi  
peluche favorito



construir un  
rompecabezas



## EXPERIENCES WITH RACE AND RACISM

Race and racism are topics that regularly come up in the news and populate our social media feeds. Whether we are discussing the lack of representation of people of color in media, immigration policies, the racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system or the events in Charlottesville, race is part of our public conversation. Race is an integral part of our history, culture and modern life and impacts all of us in society. Young people are not exempt from these conversations and in fact, want to be engaged in those discussions and should be. This lesson uses stories from *The New York Times* Race/Related column on *First Encounters with Racism* in which teenagers across the country responded to the question: “What is your earliest experience dealing with race?”

This lesson<sup>1</sup> provides an opportunity for students to learn about the language of bias and racism, explore a range of stories (through video and written pieces) of young people’s first encounters with race and racism and reflect on their own early experiences through a writing assignment.

**[Note to Teacher:** It is important to reflect on and consider that you may have students in your classroom who, because of an aspect or aspects of their identity, have been targets of racism or ethnic bias. Be prepared and sensitive to those students, taking into account the extent to which they are a minority or majority of your classroom and plan accordingly. Some participants who have been impacted by bias and discrimination may feel relieved and comfortable discussing these issues and others may feel nervous, scared or angry. Whenever possible, speak with these individuals prior to the lesson to determine how they can feel safe and comfortable discussing these topics.]

See these additional ADL resources: Lesson Plans “[Hair, Identity and Bias](#),” “[Identity-Based Bullying](#)” and “[Slurs, Offensive Jokes and How to Respond](#),” [Teaching about Racism, Violence, Inequity and the Criminal Justice System](#), [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#), [How Should I Talk about Race in My Mostly White Classroom?](#) and [Children’s and Young Adult Books about Race and Racism](#).

**Grade Level:** grades 5–7

**Time:** 45–90 minutes

**Common Core Anchor Standards:** Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Language

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Students will understand some basic terminology of bias and racism.
- Students will explore different experiences of race and racism through the use of video and reading stories.

<sup>1</sup> A version of this lesson was originally published on The New York Times Learning Network, [First Encounters With Race and Racism: Teaching Ideas for Classroom Conversations](#).



- Students will reflect on their experiences with race and racism by writing a reflective essay.

**Material:**

- *Being 12: 'People Think I'm Supposed to Talk Ghetto, Whatever That Is'* video (2015, 4 mins., WNYC, [www.wnyc.org/story/people-sometimes-think-im-supposed-talk-ghetto-whatever-kids-race/](http://www.wnyc.org/story/people-sometimes-think-im-supposed-talk-ghetto-whatever-kids-race/))
- "First Encounters With Racism" article (*The New York Times*, August 2, 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/us/first-encounters-with-racism.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/us/first-encounters-with-racism.html?_r=0), divide the four stories in this article evenly among students, one story per student)
- [Race/Related Stories: Discussion Questions](#) (one for each student)
- [Graphic Organizer: Writing Activity](#) (one for each student)

**Compelling Question: What impact do our early experiences of race and racism have?****Vocabulary:**

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL's "[Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying](#)" and "[Glossary of Education Terms](#).")

- |                  |                     |                   |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| • bias           | • immigration       | • pride           |
| • biracial       | • implicit bias     | • race            |
| • culture        | • institutionalized | • racism          |
| • discrimination | • interpersonal     | • slur            |
| • harassing      | • liberal           | • white supremacy |
| • identity       | • n-word            |                   |

**DEFINING TERMS**

1. Ask students: *What is prejudice?* If students have trouble coming up with the definition, have them split the word apart into two parts: "pre," which means before and "judge" which means to form an opinion about something or someone. Ask: *What happens when we put the two parts together?* Explain that would be judging before.

Come to a definition of **prejudice** as judging or having an idea about someone or a group of people before you actually know them. Explain that prejudice (or bias) is often directed toward people in a certain identity group such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

2. Explain to students that in this lesson, they are going to explore race and racism and it is important that they know some basic terms. Elicit and explain the following definitions as follows:

**Bias:** An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with fair judgment.

**Discrimination:** Unfair treatment of one person or group of people because of the person or group's identity (e.g. race, gender, ability, religion, culture, etc.). Discrimination is an action that can come from prejudice.

**Ethnicity:** Refers to a person's identification with a group based on characteristics such as shared history, ancestry, geographic and language origin, and culture.

**Identity:** Qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different than others.

**Racism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination against people because of their racial group.

**Slur:** An insulting, offensive or degrading remark, often based on an identity group such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

**Stereotype:** The false idea that all members of a group are the same and think and behave in the same way.

3. Have a brief discussion with students about the difference between the terms: stereotype, prejudice and discrimination. Explain that a **stereotype** is a belief about a person or group of people, **prejudice** is an attitude about a person or group of people and **discrimination** is an action that can follow prejudicial attitudes. It can be helpful to use one specific example (e.g. sexism) to explain how stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination differ from one another but are also connected. With the example of sexism, explain that a stereotype is that girls aren't strong or athletic; an example of prejudice is thinking that girls cannot compete in sports or that they are not as good as boys; and an example of discrimination is not having any female athletic teams at your school.

## VIDEO ACTIVITY: BEING 12

1. Introduce the video, *Being 12: 'People Think I'm Supposed to Talk Ghetto, Whatever That Is'*. Explain that the video is part of a series of videos that explore important topics through the eyes of young people age twelve and that this segment is about students' ideas and experiences about race, ethnicity and racism.
2. Before showing the video, instruct students to take out a piece of paper and while watching the video, they will jot down words or phrases that come to mind in reaction to the video or words that are spoken in the video they want to remember.
3. After the video, have students do a quick go-round where each student states one word from their list to describe their reaction to the video.
4. Engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What happened in the video?
  - What stood out for you as you watched the video?
  - What examples of bias, stereotypes and racism did you hear about in the video?
  - At the beginning of the video, students responded to the question, "What are you?" Have you ever been asked that? What would be your response to that question?
  - Was there someone in the video that you could relate to? How so?
  - If a video like this were filmed at our school, how would it be similar? How would it be different?
5. Clarify/explain to students that everyone has a racial identity. Sometimes white people don't think they have a racial identity because white is seen as "normal" or the "default." As a result, people mistakenly think only people of color (African-American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, Asian people) have a race or racial identity. It is important to emphasize that all people have experiences with race, whether they are obvious, hidden or implied. People might have those experiences directly or witness them happening to others. In addition, they may have certain opportunities or privileges granted as a result of their racial identity. Remind students about the white girl in the video who talked about having privilege because of her skin color.



## READING ACTIVITY

1. Prior to teaching the lesson, read the following four stories that appeared in *The New York Times* Race/Related article "[First Encounters With Racism](#)" and decide in advance whether your students are capable of reading and understanding the stories on their own or if you will read the stories aloud.

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**NOTE:** If you think your students may need some prior knowledge on some of the topics covered in the stories such as police brutality, immigration and ethnic slurs, you may want to provide some background on those topics. ADL has [lesson plans](#) on those topics; some are for high school aged students but you will get some background to provide to the students verbally.

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If you read the stories aloud, have students (while listening) jot down words or phrases that stand out for them, feelings and/or reactions to the stories or additional thoughts they have. These can be added to the list of words that students began while watching the video. Have students save the list for later.

2. After reading each story, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the [Race/Related Story Discussion Questions](#).

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**Alternative:** If you have students read the stories independently, divide them into four groups and divide the four stories equally among the students. Have students who are all reading the same story sit together, then give each group 10–15 minutes to read their story silently. After reading their stories silently, students can use the discussion questions below to have a small group discussion. Then representatives from each of the story groups will report back to the whole class by describing what they read, and sharing some of their group's reflections on the questions below. While students are listening to other groups share, they can continue to jot down words, phrases and feelings that resonate.

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3. After listening to or hearing all of the stories, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:
  - After reading and hearing about all of the stories, what stands out for you?
  - What did you learn that you didn't know before?
  - Did anything surprise you and if so, what?
  - How did each person's encounter with racism change them?
  - How were the stories similar to each other? What are some differences among the stories?
  - In any of these situations, how could someone have acted as an ally?
  - What specific ways can you act as an ally to support students whom have been targeted because of racism or an aspect of their identity?

## WORD CLOUD

1. Have students take out the words and phrases they jotted down while watching the video and listening to/reading the stories. One at a time, have students call out some or all of the words or phrases they jotted down. They can repeat a word or phrase that has already been said. As they are doing this, record the words in a word cloud generator like [Word it Out](#), [Wordle](#). If you are unable to use word cloud technology, record all of the words in a semantic web on the board/smart board and place check marks next to those words that are repeated.
2. Share the word cloud with the class and engage them in a brief discussion by asking:



- How do you feel while looking at the words all together?
- What do you see in the word cloud?
- Is it mostly negative, positive or neither? What are your thoughts and feelings?
- Are some words larger (or repeated more than once) than others, and if so, why?
- What patterns do you notice?
- What questions do you have?

### WRITING ACTIVITY: MY FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH RACE AND RACISM

1. Students will now have the opportunity to write their own stories about race and racism. The writing will be a culmination of everything they've learned and reflected upon during the course of the lesson. Have students first consider some of the elements of the four stories they read in order to use some of those strategies for their own writing including: (1) theme and message, (2) figurative language, (3) dialogue, (4) details and experiences, (5) values conveyed and (6) self-reflection. Talk about these elements to the degree necessary for your students. Distribute a copy of the [Graphic Organizer: Writing Activity](#) handout to help facilitate this process.
2. Write the following two questions on the board/smart board and explain to students that they should use one of these overall questions as a prompt for their writing:
  - What is your earliest experience dealing with race and/or racism?
  - What is an experience you've had in which race or racism played a part?
3. As explained above, remind students that everyone has a racial identity. Remind them that in the video, in addition to young people of color, there were also white kids who talked about their experience with race, racism and privilege.
4. Have students write their own race stories by reflecting on these writing prompts:
  - What happened?
  - How did you feel while this was happening?
  - What was your response and what was the response of others around you?
  - Did anyone act as an ally? Describe how and how it made you (or the person being targeted) feel.
  - What impact did the experience have on you? What did you learn from the experience?
  - Did the experience change you or someone else in some way, and if so, how?
5. Have students conference with each other (and you) over the next few days or weeks in order to produce a final piece of writing. This process should include writing, conferencing, editing and revision.

### CLOSING

Have students share their stories with the class by reading them aloud. Consider inviting parents and/or family members in to share this experience with their children.

## ADDITIONAL READING

- [10 TED Classroom Resources about Race in America](#) (TED-Ed Blog, July 25, 2016)
- ["25 Mini Films for Exploring Race, Bias and Identity with Students"](#) (*The New York Times*, March 15, 2017)
- ["Are We Raising Racists?"](#) (*The New York Times*, March 14, 2017)
- ["Babies of Color are Now the Majority, Census Says"](#) (NPR, July 1, 2016)
- ["Do Conversations About Race Belong in the Classroom?"](#) (*The Atlantic*, September 5, 2017)
- ["Seven Myths of Race and the Young Child"](#) (Research Gate, June 2012)
- [Understanding Implicit Bias](#) (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity)
- ["Yes, Race and Politics Belong in the Classroom"](#) (*Education Week*, August 15, 2017)

## COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and qualitatively, as well as in words.
Standard 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
Writing
Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
Standard 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
Language
Standard 3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
Standard 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.



# RACE/RELATED STORIES: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## FOLLOWED BY A POLICE OFFICER

- What happened to Riley?
- What were your thoughts and feelings as you read/listened to the story?
- Why did Riley's mother prepare him for having an encounter with a police officer?
- What does Riley mean when he says that in his community, a police officer is usually seen as more of a threat than a friend?
- Can you relate to Riley and his experience and if so, how?
- What impact do you think this experience had on Riley?
- In what way is this story about race and racism?

## A SLUR DIRECTED AT ME

- What happened to Marianne?
- What were your thoughts and feelings as you read/listened to the story?
- Why do you think Marianne wasn't surprised at first when she heard the slur directed at her?
- Why do you think Marianne started thinking differently about her communication with white peers after she moved to a town with more Asian-American people?
- Can you relate to Marianne and if so, how?
- What impact do you think this experience had on Marianne?
- In what way is this story about race and racism?

## LESSON FROM KINDERGARTEN

- What happened to Maya?
- What were your thoughts and feelings as you read/listened to the story?
- Why do you think Maya's father started talking to her about race and racism at such a young age?
- Why does Maya feel she has to choose one race over the other in how she identifies herself?
- Can you relate to Maya and if so, how?
- What impact do you think this experience had on Maya?
- In what way is this story about race and racism?



**WHAT I WISH TO TELL**

- What happened to Jose?
- What were your thoughts and feelings as you read/listened to the story?
- How did Jose and his friend know the white couple was talking about them?
- What were some of the difficulties Jose faced in his journey, and why did he wish the white couple knew that?
- Can you relate to Jose and if so, how?
- What impact do you think this experience had on Jose?
- In what way is this story about race and racism?

## GRAPHIC ORGANIZER: WRITING ACTIVITY

**OVERALL QUESTION** *(Jot down some notes about either one of the following questions)*

What is your earliest experience dealing with race and/or racism?

What is an experience you've had in which race or racism played a part?

**Theme/Message:** What is the main theme or message I am trying to get across?

**Figurative Language:** What are some metaphors, images or other figurative language I want to use to convey elements of my story?

**Dialogue:** Do I want to use dialogue about an interaction I had? If so, what?

**Details:** What specific experiences, interactions and details are important to share as part of the story?

**Values:** What is at least one important value that I want my reader to take from my story?

**Self-Reflection:** What inner thoughts do I want to convey about this experience and how it affected me?

# *First Encounters With Racism*

Aug. 2, 2017

What is your earliest experience dealing with race? We partnered this week with Youth Radio, an award-winning news network based in Oakland, Calif., to ask that question of teenagers from across the country. They told us what happened to them, how they reacted and how the encounter changed them.

Here are four such stories:

## **Followed by a Police Officer**

Image



Riley Lockett, 16, Youth Radio, Oakland California

About two months ago, I was walking to the BART station from school, sipping on soda and listening to a podcast when I noticed a blue uniform following me like a shadow. It was a white police officer. He scanned me as if he were the Terminator, trying to see if I



posed a threat. I had never been stopped by a cop before. But I wasn't scared or even nervous. I was prepared.

My mother was always gearing me up for something: a good education, future job security and, most of all, institutionalized racism. Every time we passed a police car, she would drill my sister and me on what to do if and when a police officer stops us. We would begrudgingly repeat what our superior said: "Maintain eye contact, stand straight, speak when spoken to, no sudden movements."

As children, we never understood why she grilled us like that. Then, when I was 12, Trayvon Martin was killed. Even though it wasn't a cop who killed him, I started to comprehend what she was preparing us for. Although we live in a quiet suburb of Oakland, we are in a city where a police officer is usually seen as more of a threat than a friend. As a young black man, I know an officer of the law can shoot me no matter where I am — and maybe especially in the middle of Orinda, the mostly white city where I was being stopped for the first time.

So, as the cop was questioning me, I decided to practice what my mom preached.

"Is there a problem, officer?" I asked in my most articulate, mature, but nonviolent voice.

"No. What's your name?"

"Riley Lockett."

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"Where do you go to school?"

"Orinda Academy, just up the hill. But I live in Oakland."

"Do you have ID?"

"Yes, here you go."

I felt like I was performing a one-man show I've been rehearsing my whole life. He eyed my ID, then looked through me while handing it back. He turned on his radio and mumbled some breaker-breaker nonsense into it, and in a few seconds he got a few squawks back.

"You're free to go," he said to me in a tone that made it sound like his mind was on something else.

I felt bold enough to ask, “What was the problem, officer?”

“Oh, some guy robbed a convenience store a couple streets over,” he told me. “He fled in this direction, and you matched the description.”

I’ve never had to face the color of my skin in anything but a mirror. So as far as police interactions go, I’d say my first one went pretty well. I know there will be plenty more as I get older.

Having to spend my childhood rehearsing for the day a police officer would pull me over may sound scary. And I’m aware it’s not something parents of all races feel the need to teach their kids. But the day it actually happened, I was grateful, at least, that my mom made sure I was ready.

## A Slur Directed at Me



Marianne Nacanaynay, 15, Youth Radio-Mountainlake Terrace, Wash.

The first time someone directed a racial slur toward me I was at a pizza place in Everett, a town in western Washington State. One of my friends who works with me on our high school newspaper wanted to get lunch early, and the place was already crowded with a line stretching around the block. I was waiting outside of the restaurant and chatting on the phone when out of the corner of my eye, I saw two dudes walking by. They were

young looking — teenagers or 20-somethings — with light skin and blond/brown hair. As they passed me, I heard them laugh and say, “(expletive) chink.”

It took me a few moments to process what I had just heard. I was taken aback, but not exactly surprised. After all, there I was, a Filipina reporter covering a Trump rally.

Washington State tends to be super liberal. We had the first elected married gay mayor of a major American city. We’ve legalized recreational marijuana. Until recently, Republicans I knew here were mostly “in the closet” in the sense they didn’t talk much about their opinions in public. But I’ve learned that doesn’t mean racism doesn’t exist in Washington — it’s just typically a less overt brand of racism.

Growing up, I lived in Auburn, a suburb south of Seattle, and there weren’t a lot of other kids who looked like me. Back then, it didn’t bother me, because I didn’t think too much about race. My family raised me with phrases like “People are people,” and “It’s who you are inside that counts.”

I remember the time I had a white classmate come over to my house for dinner. We served *adobo*, which is chicken or pork that’s been marinated in soy sauce or vinegar then fried, and *ube*, a dessert made of purple yam. The girl politely tried everything but mostly pushed the food around the plate. When I asked her about it later, she said the flavors weren’t familiar to her.

Then in sixth grade we moved to Mountlake Terrace, a suburb about 20 minutes north of Seattle with a noticeable Asian population. Being around more Asian friends, I found myself reflecting differently on my interactions with white peers.

I brought a plate of the same *adobo* to a party, and people loved it. Having people like my culture made me feel more comfortable with it, too.

So, after years of slowly opening myself up to having pride about my race and culture, hearing two boys call me a chink in the middle of a pizza place was a snap back to reality. On the one hand, it was so over-the-top, it was almost comical. I mean, it’s not even the right racial slur, since I’m not Chinese.

Sometimes I think back on that incident, like when I hear about other people being called a racial slur, or when I hear about people harassing others at Trump rallies. And I remember how I felt vulnerable. It’s a reminder that there are some places where I am still considered the “other.”



## A Lesson From Kindergarten



Maya James, 19, Youth Radio- Traverse City, Mich.

Shortly after enrolling in kindergarten, one of my classmates threw the N-word at me in a small scuffle. I cannot remember what the little boy was so upset about — it was probably something elementary school students usually get upset about. Maybe I was hogging the markers; maybe I cut in line, or vice versa.

It was the first time I had ever heard that word. I didn't know how to react. I had many questions. Should I be upset? Could I call the white student the N-word, too? Who invented this word? Do adults use the word?

Before that moment, I had no idea what race was or what class meant. Now I had to grow up.

My teachers tried to intervene — yanking the little boy's arm and demanding he look in my eyes and "see the pain she feels!" They forced him to stay in and write apology letters during recess in their words, not his. "I should have thought before saying black people are bad," says one note I've kept all these years, "To me, you are a good friend."

But the letters didn't stop the name-calling or the rock throwing at recess, at the bus stop or after school.

Back then I had a lot of loud temper tantrums. I was not a picnic for my parents. I cried a lot, I was irritable. That's when my father — who grew up in Longview, Tex., at the height of Jim Crow politics — started talking to me about race. After my teachers told him about the incident, he had no choice; he had to teach his 5-year-old daughter the tragic story of African genocide and white supremacy that was the American slave trade.

My dad's struggle and the struggle of his parents were now rubbing off on me at such a young age. No longer a little girl in the suburbs, but a descendant of people considered cattle. No reparations.

I remember thinking: This is unfair! What did I do to be born black?

Traverse City, Mich., is 94 percent white. So it's no wonder I felt alone growing up as a half-black, half-white little kid.

I am biracial, but in the United States, more often than not, I am always going to be labeled a person of color. I constantly have to choose between one side of my culture and the other — always seeking a greater identity. I feel like a puzzle piece that got lost, always trying to find some way to fit.



## What I Wish to Tell



Jose, 16, Youth Radio (*Jose is undocumented. He is using his first name only to protect his privacy. His essay has been translated from Spanish.*)- Los Angeles

I remember the first day I learned what American racism means. My friend and I were walking home from school and we walked by a white couple. They looked at us and started talking to each other in hushed tones. We couldn't understand everything they said, but we caught some bad stuff about Latinos and immigration, and we knew they were talking about us. We just kept on walking. It's not worth getting into a back-and-forth. It's better to just be quiet.

They don't know the stuff that we had to go through back home.

I wish I could tell them about my life in El Salvador. Back there, things are really tough with gangs. There was a time when I was walking to the store and a couple of gang members stopped me and asked, "What do you bang?" I don't, I told them. "So what are you doing in this area?" they replied. It was clearly a threat.

I would tell them how hard it was to say goodbye to my friends and family. I wasn't going to go to same school anymore. I wasn't going to have the same friends. I wasn't going to live with the family I grew up with all my life. I asked God to help me, asked him to guide me, to bless me and keep me safe during this journey.



I would tell them about the day I left home, how I woke up at 3 a.m. nervous and sad. I didn't know what to expect. I envisioned the United States as this big city where things were so close and everything was accessible, like hospitals and businesses. When I finally got here, everything felt strange to me, from the language to the streets. Everything.

I would tell them about how hard I've worked for people to accept me. At school, I've tried to be friendly, but there have been times when people have said things to me because I speak Spanish. You know, racist people who say, "This is America. You should speak English." I don't care what people say. At the end of the day, they don't pay my bills.

Back in El Salvador, I didn't really know what racism was. I knew it had something to do with discriminating against someone. After being in the United States for a while, I learned the meaning and impact of that word. It's sad that people can be hurtful. They just don't understand. It's hard to be an immigrant kid. Our backgrounds haven't been easy, and we just want something better.

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This series is a collaboration with Youth Radio.

# EMPATHY



**We practice empathy. We do our best to listen and learn from people so we can connect with them and their experiences.**

# DIVERSITY



**We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate all the ways we're different and all the things we have in common. We work hard for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.**



# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



**Restorative Justice is the commitment to building a loving community that is sustainable and growing. If someone in the community hurts someone else, we focus on communicating, understanding and solving the problem instead of on punishment.**