

Addressing race and racism with our children

The Citizen Review Panel for Children's Services in Washington County is focused on transforming risk into wellness in our community. We know there are many challenging conversations and situations that our families are navigating at this time. In the wake of George Floyd's death and the building movement to fight against racism in our country, parents often find themselves unsure of what they can or should communicate with their children about race and racism.

Children are observant and look to the adults in their lives for support, reassurance, and guidance. They frequently pick up on and are affected by the conversations in their home, at school, and in their community. They are also witness to sad and disturbing events in the news and on social media, as well as what they hear in talking with friends.

Experts suggest that no age is too young to start these conversations and highlight that the key is to talk with children in developmentally appropriate ways about race and racism. Parents are recommended to keep things simple for younger children, have honest conversations, and highlight historical facts. Parents can also ask children what they have heard, what they think, and what their questions are. These conversations don't have to be perfect, and parents don't have to have all of the answers. The important thing is to open the door for conversation. If you don't have an answer, tell them that you can work to find the answer together.

We understand these important conversations are heavy, uncomfortable, and difficult to navigate. The Citizen Review Panel would like to provide some information and tools to assist parents in talking with their children about race and racism. Whether you are starting your first discussion, or continuing the conversation in your family, we invite you to check out the resources below.

- **23 Books to Help Kids of All Ages Learn About Race**
Books are a very useful tool to help facilitate conversations with children. This link contains a list of books that may be used at different ages and developmental stages. While many books are on backorder at this time, you can also find some of them on YouTube.
<https://www.self.com/gallery/childrens-books-on-race>
- **Anti-Racism for Kids: An Age-by-Age Guide to Fighting Hate**
This guide from *Parents* breaks down discussion points and approaches for the age groups of 0-6, 6-8, 9-11, Tweens and Teens.
https://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/advice/how-to-teach-your-kids-to-fight-hate-an-age-by-age-guide/?fbclid=IwAR11syrSZVg5eGTRVWAjy9ttzTjM63S6c3_6PtKu2s-BJCDF6g9-fd7IAHI
- **How Do You Talk to Kids About Racism? Two Black Minnesota Teachers Share How They Do It**
Listen to two Black educators share advice on MPR (Minnesota Public Radio) on how they have addressed these questions with their fifth grade students.
<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/06/29/how-do-you-talk-to-kids-about-racism-two-black-minnesota-teachers-share-how-they-do-it>
- **How White Parents Can Talk To Their Kids About Race**
This article and 10-minute listen from NPR (National Public Radio) features the advice of Jennifer Harvey, author of *"Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America"*
<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/03/869071246/how-white-parents-can-talk-to-their-kids-about-race?fbclid=IwAR0GrjhsMEza7vzKcPxPAWZnYVUDGLtSuJ2uGjm5XudGwQHy0S6DmaVc1fw>

- **Watch the entire CNN/Sesame Street Racism Town Hall**

The Sesame Street Town Hall on Racism can be viewed together with children and features questions and answers from families, featuring segments with Big Bird, Elmo, and Abby Cadabby
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/06/app-news-section/cnn-sesame-street-race-town-hall-app-june-6-2020-app/index.html>

- **Intro to Racial Justice for Families with Kids Age 6-12**

This program is created by Nico Van Ostrand, a Filipino teacher in White Bear Lake, and provides a sample four-week curriculum facilitating activities and conversations around racial justice.
<http://nicovo.weebly.com/intro-to-race-for-kids.html>

- **George Floyd. Ahmaud Arbery. Breonna Taylor. What Do We Tell Our Children?**

This USA Today article features the advice of Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, a psychologist, educator, and author of *"Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations about Race"*
https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/05/31/how-talk-kids-racism-racial-violence-police-brutality/5288065002/?fbclid=IwAR31YZsR6U5pCdYuR7_DMvoxEiWTAEzAVyLMjSHVb9ROaSNKnvvXgzO1Ito

- **How to Talk to Kids about Race and Racism**

This article from Parent Toolkit features a variety of experts giving advice on engaging in these difficult conversations, including setting the example, addressing mistakes, and being an advocate.
<https://www.parenttoolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/advice/social-awareness/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-race-and-racism?fbclid=IwAR1e0xv-4GG4ZpDF28XLuK-kzbihjffxn-YT1VfEzG1Kon6TVM6Xjpje4Fk>

Together, we can take a stance against racism in Washington County and work to create a community where the color of a child's skin does not present a risk to their well-being.

Susannah Barnes, Washington County Citizen Review Panel Member

Jan Hayne, Washington County Citizen Review Panel Chair

The Citizen Review Panel for Children's Services provides opportunities for members of the community to have an integral role in ensuring that Child Protective Service Systems are protecting children from abuse and neglect, working to strengthen families, and meeting the permanency needs of children. For more information on becoming a member of the Citizen Review Panel, contact Nissa Knutson, Community Services Supervisor, at 651-430-4111 or Nissa.Knutson@co.washington.mn.us.