



# Implicit biases and debiasing

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## What is implicit bias?

People hold a **bias** when they have a preference for (or aversion to) a person or group of people based on a particular characteristic.

These thoughts and feelings are **implicit** if we are not aware of them or don't know where they come from.

**Implicit bias** describes attitudes towards others or stereotypes that we hold without conscious knowledge. Identifying implicit biases is the first step toward overcoming them.

## What is debiasing?

We can reflect on our unconscious biases and be proactive in identifying and undoing the negative stereotypes we hold. That is called **debiasing**.

Understanding implicit bias and debiasing can help Family Voices ensure equitable work.

## How do we address implicit bias and debiasing?

**Encourage personal engagement, self-reflection, and open communication** about each person's implicit biases and individual and collective debiasing efforts.

**Create opportunities** for leadership to reflect on and address the impact of individual biases on organizational work.

**Develop, review, and update policies and procedures** outlined in the Employee Handbook and Operations Manual to directly promote debiasing.

**Directly address internal conflict** within the organization from the perspective of implicit biases.

**Intentionally use debiasing work with staff and Board of Directors** as a foundation to support the effective implementation of the other methodologies.

**Facilitate discussions** among staff, network members, BOD members, and external partners about the impact of bias and strategies to counteract it and mitigate its negative impact.

## The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) discusses eight tactics that can be used to reduce implicit biases, using the acronym **IMPLICIT**.

### **I** **Introspection**

Set aside time to understand your biases by taking a personal inventory of them. This can be done by taking tests to identify the biases you may have.

### **M** **Mindfulness**

Once you understand the biases you hold, be mindful that you're more likely to give in to them when you're under pressure or need to make quick decisions. If you're feeling stressed, pause for a minute, collect yourself, and take a few deep breaths.

### **P** **Perspective-Taking**

If you think you may be stereotyping people or groups, imagine what it would feel like for others to stereotype you.

### **L** **Learn to Slow Down**

Before jumping to conclusions about others, remind yourself of positive examples of people from their age group, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This can include friends; colleagues; or public figures, such as athletes, members of the clergy, or local leaders.

### **I** **Individualization**

Remind yourself that all people have individual characteristics that are separate from others within their group. Focus on the things you have in common.

### **C** **Check Your Messaging**

Instead of telling yourself that you don't see people based on their color, class, or sexual orientation, learn to use statements that embrace inclusivity.

### **I** **Institutionalize Fairness**

In the workplace, learn to embrace and support diversity. The AAFP suggests individuals use the Equity and Empowerment Lens, which is designed to help organizations improve planning and resource allocation to foster more equitable policies.

### **T** **Take Two**

Overcoming unconscious biases takes time. Understand that this is a lifelong process and that deprogramming your biases requires constant mindfulness and work.

## More resources on implicit bias and debiasing



See what the **Perception Institute** says about [Implicit Bias](#) in relation to research and representation.



Read this blog post from Maryville University about [How to Identify and Overcome Your Implicit Bias](#).



Learn about your own **implicit biases** with the Implicit Association Test from Harvard.



Increase your **understanding of implicit bias** through the [Implicit Bias Module Series](#) from The Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity.



Extend your knowledge with **self-assessments and resources** from the [Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence \(NCCC\)](#).