



SECTION 1: Overview

PLEASE NOTE:

This section corresponds with the “Overview” PowerPoint presentation available online at www.aafp.org/implicit-bias.

Implicit bias, defined as, “the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner,” is a contributing factor to health disparities.¹ Family physicians should make an effort to explore their own implicit biases so they can identify unconscious decisions and actions that may negatively affect the communities they serve.

Common types of implicit bias include the following²:

- **Affinity** – Preference for people who share qualities with you or someone you like
- **Anchoring** – Tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information offered when you are making decisions
- **Attribution** – Tendency to attribute other people’s successes to luck or help from others and attribute their failures to lack of skill or personal shortcomings
- **Beauty** – Assumptions about people’s skills or personality based on their physical appearance and tendency to favor people who are more attractive
- **Confirmation** – Selective focus on information that supports your initial opinion(s)
- **Conformity** – Tendency to be swayed too much by the views of other people
- **Contrast** – Assessment of two or more similar things by comparing them with one another rather than looking at their individual merits
- **Gender** – Preference for one gender over the other
- **Halo** – Focus on one particularly positive feature about a person that clouds your judgement
- **Horns** – Focus on one particularly negative feature about a person that clouds your judgement

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) recommends educating physicians about implicit bias and strategies to address it to support culturally appropriate, patient-centered care and reduce health disparities.¹

Gaps in Medical Education

Research has shown that implicit bias is pervasive among all health care professionals and has deleterious effects on patient health.³ However, formal medical education and training curricula are often void of content that provides a framework for identifying and mitigating implicit bias in clinical practice. Faculty who actively seek to incorporate this topic in training often face barriers, such as a limited number of subject matter experts who can provide instruction.^{4,5} Health care professionals also lack opportunities to demonstrate bias mitigation strategies in practice or to engage with patients who can share experiences of encountering implicit bias in clinical settings.^{4,6,7}



The Need for Implicit Bias Training

To achieve health equity and reduce disparity in health outcomes, particularly those that are the result of interactions with the health care system, health care professionals need to know the following:

- The pervasiveness of implicit bias among all health care professionals⁵
- The purpose of implicit bias self-assessments and how to use them, including how to interpret the results^{5,7}
- How to interpret findings of implicit bias research⁶
- How implicit bias affects patients and their interactions with health care professionals⁴
- How to apply techniques for mitigating the effects of implicit bias^{3,7,8}

Goals of Implicit Bias Training

Implicit bias training should be viewed as one component of an organization's widespread, overarching strategy for implementing structural and institutional changes to achieve equitable health outcomes for its community. The primary goals of this training are:

- To promote awareness of implicit bias among all members of the health care team
- To provide resources for moderating the negative effects of implicit bias on patient care

Core training components include an overview of what implicit bias is and how it operates (specifically in the health care setting); tools for self-assessment; and strategies that can be used to reduce bias within the clinic and/or health care system.

This course includes prework that should be completed online by participants prior to the first session. In-person training activities include self-assessments, case studies, small-group discussions, and development of conscious mitigation strategies to overcome implicit bias. Based on the preferences of your organization, these activities can be conducted as a full-day training event or as a series that focuses on individual sections (or combinations of sections) over a number of training sessions.

All training materials, including videos, PowerPoint presentations, and additional resources, are available online at www.aafp.org/implicit-bias.

Learning Objectives

- Increase self-awareness by reflecting on the results of the implicit bias self-assessment
- Demonstrate conscious mitigation strategies to overcome implicit bias
- Apply implicit bias reduction skills to case studies
- Understand the effect of implicit bias on real-life patients

Standards of Conduct

Individuals who use these implicit bias training materials are viewed as AAFP representatives. The AAFP expects its faculty to meet high ethical standards and to personify the ideals represented by the organization. Professionalism is the standard of conduct for the AAFP, and each member of the AAFP community has a responsibility to act with integrity, compassion, and respect for others. Honoring this responsibility and being accountable constitute the essence of professionalism.



FACILITATOR TIP
More information about AAFP faculty roles and responsibilities is available online in the AAFP’s Faculty Handbook for Live CME Activities.

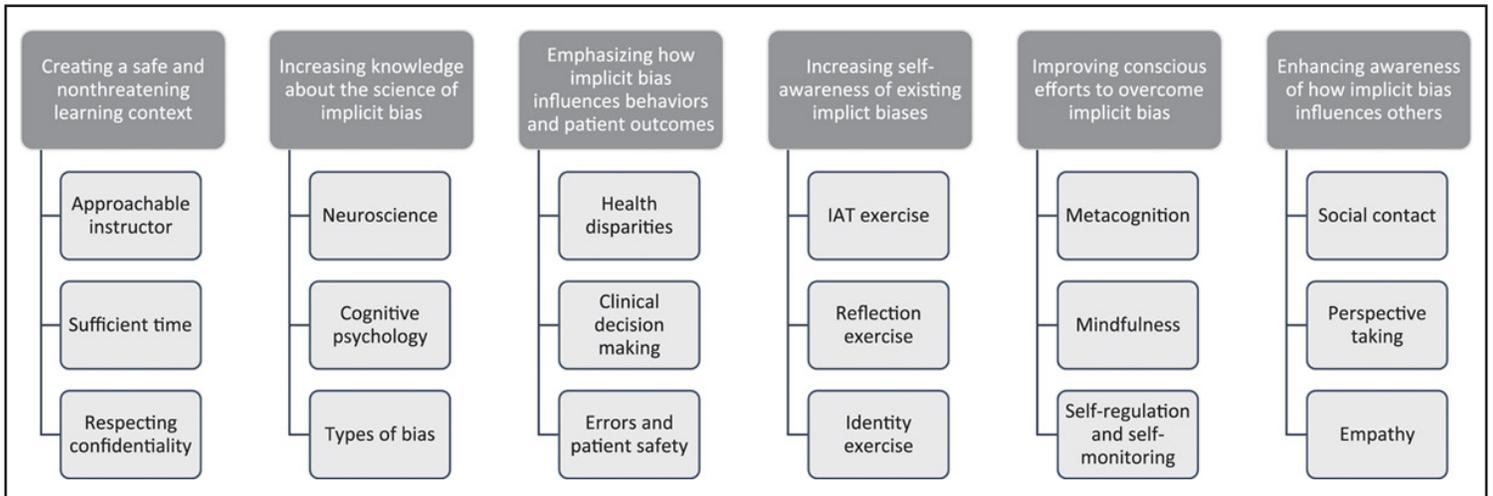
Facilitators and learners should be mindful of the following when participating in implicit bias training:

- The AAFP opposes all discrimination in any form, including, but not limited to, that on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic affiliation, health, age, disability, economic status, body habitus, or national origin.
- All participants should avoid voicing political opinions, stereotypes, jokes, or comments that could be perceived as offensive. At times, you may feel an impulse to lighten a topic. However, following live activities, learners often report that they did not appreciate jokes, especially those that are political in nature.
- Learners will likely include advanced practice professionals, nurses, and physicians from other specialties. Please keep this in mind as you make references.

Framework

This training is based on a six-part actionable framework for integrating implicit bias awareness and management into health professional education (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1. Framework for integrating implicit bias awareness and management into health professional education



IAT = implicit association test.

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Implicit bias training should be used as part of an ongoing individual and organizational commitment to change, not as a “check the box” compliance activity.



Target Audiences

Learners should come prepared with some fundamental knowledge of what implicit bias is and how it impacts health outcomes. This training is designed to increase learner competence while creating an environment that supports self-reflection and personal growth. It has been developed with primary care physicians and their practice teams in mind. However, it can be used by all health care and mental health professionals, especially those providing care to patients who may be at greater risk of exposure to implicit bias because of the following:

- Age
- Body habitus
- Color
- Disability
- Economic status
- Gender identity
- Immigration status
- Mental health
- Nationality
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

Course Evaluation

At the end of the course, you will ask learners to reflect on the training and provide feedback. A customizable CME Activity Evaluation Form from the AAFP is available online at www.aafp.org/cme/creditsys/about/tools.html#templates.

FACILITATOR TIP

Be sure that you provide sufficient time so learners don't feel rushed. Also, be aware that the types of health care professionals in the group may have varying levels of power and influence. With this in mind, attempt to create an environment where everyone's voice and opinions are heard and valued.

Learner Activity: Implicit Bias Pop Quiz

In this activity, you will address some common misconceptions by countering false statements with facts about implicit biases and the effectiveness of implicit bias training. You may allow time for learners to share other opinions they have heard so that you can provide clarification or point them to one of the recommended readings for further reference.