

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Institute

Bias Mitigation

Bias is our tendency to see the world from our lens of experience. It can lead us to ignore evidence or make assumptions not based on evidence. It can create blinders for those involved in the threat analysis or mitigation process and impact our ability to build rapport, connect with students, and create safe/neutral spaces. While we can never remove bias, we can train to make us more aware of how bias can affect decision making.

Sources of Bias

 Gender, gender identity experiences, and sexual orientation	 The friends, family, and peers around us	 Experiences with mental illness or physical disabilities	 Religious beliefs and political experiences
 Economic differences and experiences of wealth and poverty	 Race/ethnicity, world view, and generational expectations	 Exposure to different cultures or geographic areas	

Common Types of Bias



Anchor Bias. This bias can impact a team member when they become anchored or locked on a particular piece of data or first impression on a case and are unwilling to consider rival, alternative hypothesizes. The bias occurs when we rely too heavily on the first piece of information we are given about a topic. We can manage this by having group discussions and display a willingness to look behind our first impressions on a case.



Availability Bias. This occurs when we lean into an over-reliance upon readily available (most recent) information. When gather information about a case, team members should guard against focusing solely on the low-hanging fruit and data around us, but rather finding the information needed to best assess the case and develop culturally competent interventions.



Blind Spot Bias. This involves a team member's tendency to miss crucial elements of a case because they are unable to see the data from a balanced and reasonable perspective. These team members may be very good at spotting systematic errors in others' decisions but are unable to see their own mistakes. One way this is addressed is through having a diverse team with varied perspectives.



Confirmation Bias. Here the team member may form an early assumption and progress with the case seeking to overvalue evidence that fits with and/or confirms their assumption. When gathering information, team members are encouraged to consider the question: are you interviewing or validating?



Dunning-Kruger Effect. This is the tendency for team members to over-estimate their abilities in certain areas such as threat assessment, counseling, or law enforcement. They make assumptions that since they have had some training, they are able to reach further than they really should. This can also happen in reverse, where people who are good at a task are hesitant to share because they under-estimate their competence in the task.



In Group/Out Group. Here a team member tends toward gathering data and making decisions that are favorable toward the someone who is like the team member. This could be a shared activity, place of birth, love of a sports team, or connection to a group, club, or organization. We guard against this by leaning into the team experience and being aware of our personal connections, either for the good or bad, on a given case that is presented to the team.