



Capacity Building  
CENTER FOR TRIBES

# FAMILY ASSESSMENT TOOL HOW TO OVERCOME BIAS

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

Every assessment you do can change the course of someone's life. It is important to be self-aware, intentional about engaging with families, and to use the information you collect to make decisions.



## **SLOW DOWN**

The first step is to give ourselves time to slow down, be deliberate, present, and logical. Slowing down helps us carefully process, rather than automatically making judgments based on past experiences. Taking a moment before we work with families can be helpful to remind ourselves to be fully present.

## **CREATE AN OPEN MIND**

We often process information by comparing current events, ideas, and people against past experiences. We need to consciously work to separate our memories of past experiences from what is happening in the present.

## **RECOGNIZE DIFFERENCES**

We're all aware of differences in age, gender, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, religion, etc, and how those characteristics may influence people's beliefs and behaviors. We all have a tendency to be most comfortable with people like us. This reinforces unconscious bias. As practitioners, we need to be able to work with people who are different from us without allowing our biases to interfere.

## **ACKNOWLEDGE OUR OWN BIAS**

Awareness of preconceptions allows us to correct or compensate for them. Adjusting for bias can take place when we have awareness and understand the importance of addressing our own biases in order to work effectively with families.





## **REVIEW OUR INTERNAL CONVERSATION**

Are we basing our decisions on quick judgments or first impressions? Are we basing our decisions on facts? It is important to stop and think about the impact any bias may have on our work with families.

## **LOOK AT OUR OWN BEHAVIOR**

By looking at our own behavior, we may uncover established patterns of thinking and decision making. If we find that we have a tendency to make quick judgments about people, we have the opportunity to change.

## **CHANGE OUR LENS**

Practice unbiased thinking by acknowledging that anyone may fall into patterns of bias and recognizing our unconscious actions. Finding solutions to biased thinking may take experimentation and refinement.

## **REFRESH OURSELVES**

When we are tired, hungry, working too hard, or feeling stressed out, biases are more likely to emerge. Be intentional in using vacation and sick days; by practicing self-care, we can lessen the likelihood of reverting to biased thinking.

## **ASK FOR SUPPORT**

Sometimes, as practitioners, we might feel overwhelmed, and we may need to seek the support of others, either informally, with colleagues and mentors, or formally, with support professionals. It's healthy to recognize that we all need support.



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ABOUT "TOOLS FOR GROWTH" RESOURCES. The Capacity Building Center for Tribes' Tools for Growth resources are developed by a team of American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous child welfare professionals from across Indian Country who are dedicated to providing tribal communities with the tools they need to thrive and build their capacity to strengthen children, youth, families, and communities. The group works together to both establish a common vision of the resources needed and create content.