

April 10, 2024

## Best Practices for Tackling Implicit Bias

Dear provider,

"Healthy is for everyone" means striving for equitable access to high quality health care services for every person in San Mateo County. Unfortunately, the reality is that systemic injustices persist, and health care experiences are not equal for all.

**One of the ways that systemic injustice shows up in health care is implicit bias.** According to the American Psychological Association, "implicit bias" (also known as implicit prejudice or implicit attitude) is a negative attitude, of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group.

All are capable of implicit bias. Here are best practices to help tackle implicit bias in your office or facility. You can also find more resources on our website here:

<https://www.hpsm.org/provider/resources/cultural-competency>

### Best Practices:

- Use person-first language: Person-first language focuses on a person rather than their characteristics such as gender, religion, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, ability, etc. These characteristics should only be discussed when they are relevant to the conversation.
- Stereotype replacement: Become aware of the stereotypes you hold and create non-stereotypical alternatives for them.
- Emotion regulation: Reflect on your "gut feelings" and negative reactions to people from different social groups. Be aware that positive emotions during a clinical encounter make stereotyping less likely.
- Mindfulness: Keep your attention on the present moment so you can recognize an unhelpful thought before you act on it.
- Perspective-taking: Consider experiences from the point of view of the patient. You can do this by reading or watching content that discusses those experiences or directly interacting with people from those groups.

- Ask questions: Not sure? It's ok to ask. This gets the conversation going and helps you get to know more about who you are working with or caring for. You can also learn more about implicit bias on our website.

If you want a more in-depth overview of implicit bias, please reach out to [PSInquiries@hpsm.org](mailto:PSInquiries@hpsm.org). Our Health Equity Team will set you up with online training and resources.

Thank you,  
The Health Plan of San Mateo