

KEEPING OUR BIASES IN CHECK AT THE POLLS

As a poll worker, your job is to help ensure that every eligible voter in your community can cast their ballot. And it's important that you serve every voter who comes into your polling location without judgment.

All of us have biases (an inclination for or against something or someone) that can show up in different ways. Sometimes we're aware of our biases (**explicit bias**) and sometimes we're not (**implicit bias**).

For example, you may know that you have a tendency to like people who grew up in the same place as you - this is an explicit bias. But you may not realize that you also have an inclination against people who look different than you do.

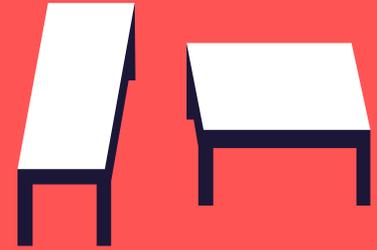
We all have implicit biases based on our life experiences - good and bad. Implicit biases are unconscious assumptions that we make of people based on how they look, speak or behave. These biases impact how we interact with people. Implicit biases can cause problems when they result in us treating people differently based on assumptions and not on facts.

As a poll worker it's your responsibility to check your biases at the door and treat all voters fairly. This guide will help you better understand how implicit bias can get in the way of people's right to vote and how to prepare to be the best poll worker possible.

HOW DO BIASES SHOW UP ON ELECTION DAY?

Implicit biases about language, customs, types of identification, or familiarity with the voting process can all cause poll workers to question some voters while giving other voters the benefit of the doubt and greater assistance.

WHICH TABLE IS LONGER?



They are actually the same length. This is an example of how our biases can lead to us also making the wrong assumptions about people, or unevenly applying policies and procedures.

Exercise: Close your eyes and envision people in the following three occupations: a doctor, a college professor, and stay-at-home parent.

Did you envision them as a specific gender? What was their age? What was their race or ethnicity? What physical characteristics do you imagine?

Notice how our mind can quickly create images and perceptions of people that we don't even realize we're consciously thinking of.

This is an example of our implicit bias.

Implicit bias can also cause us to make assumptions about our fellow poll workers, including their knowledge or ability, who is in charge and who is best suited for a particular role at the polling place.

As a poll worker, it's important to be intentional about putting aside our biases to ensure everyone is able to exercise their right to vote. Here are a few ways biases may cause poll workers to treat voters differently:

Asking certain voters to present voter identification:

There have been many instances of people of color having their IDs checked at a higher rate than white people, and being unfairly turned away from the polls—even in states that do not even require ID verification. These decisions are made by poll workers who are letting their unfair biases show up on Election Day. Don't let this be you!

Questioning when a voter needs assistance:

A voter may need assistance with voting if they have a disability (even one you may not be able to recognize) or with reading their ballot. A poll worker may not think someone "looks" like they need assistance, and may treat them differently based on that. Or, a voter and a poll worker may not be able to communicate easily due to language barriers, which could cause a poll worker to treat them differently.

Signatures & Name Changes:

Sometimes a voter's signatures may not perfectly match what you see in the poll book. Here are common things to consider when questioning a voter's name or signature:

- People who were recently married or divorced may have a different name or hyphenated name so it may appear different from when they registered.
- Voters with disabilities or older voters may have a signature that looks different than when they registered.
- Voters who speak languages with a different alphabet than English may have limited experience signing their name in a way you recognize.
- LGBTQIA+ voters may use a different name and have a different signature than when they initially registered to vote.

Ask in your official training about the procedure for signature matching and be aware of which voters you question about inconsistencies. Are your implicit biases creeping into your judgment?