IMPLICIT BIAS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Use this tool to better assess city, state and federal legislation that may impact communities highlighted in Women Against Abuse’s policy agenda.

Instructions: First examine the proposed legislation and review the list below. If you can check off any of the boxes, then this legislation may require stricter scrutiny. Review this checklist for all proposed legislation that may target the policy agenda.

The following conditions increase the likelihood that legislation is being influenced by implicit bias. Prior to supporting any legislation, note instances where bias can be addressed to better guide the decision-making process.

BIAS CHECKLIST

- Does this legislation directly support the funding of Women Against Abuse?
  - Highlights positive reciprocity. Agencies are more likely to impulsively do something that feels like a favor to them. When you feel like you’ve been given something, you are more likely to find yourself giving something back. Reciprocity is especially important to note if legislation benefits the agency but may not be favorable more broadly.

- Does this legislation harm the agency or client population?
  - Negative reciprocity.

- Has this legislation or legislator done something positive for the agency in any respect or at any time?
  - More subtle than reciprocity. This is sometimes called the “foot in the door” technique. If you have spoken favorably of an idea, a contribution, or a contributor, or approved past work of the contributor, you will be likely biased in favor of that contributor.

- Does this legislation appeal to emotional states?
  - Certain emotional states (anger, disgust) can exacerbate implicit bias in judgments of stigmatized group members, even if the source of the negative emotion has nothing to do with the current situation or with the issue of social groups or stereotypes more broadly.

- Is this legislation ambiguous?
  - When the basis for judgment is somewhat vague (e.g., situations that call for discretion; cases that involve the application of new, unfamiliar laws), biased judgments are more likely. Without more explicit, concrete criteria for decision making, individuals tend to
disambiguate the situation using whatever information is most easily accessible—including stereotypes.

- Does this legislation inappropriately target special social groups?
  - A decision maker may be more likely to think in terms of race and use racial stereotypes because race often is a salient, i.e., easily accessible, attribute. However, when decision makers become conscious of the potential for prejudice, they often attempt to correct for it in inappropriate ways.

- Did the drafters of this legislation appeal to targeted stakeholders when drafting the text?
  - This highlights lower effort cognitive processing. When individuals engage in low-effort information processing, they rely on stereotypes and produce more stereotype-consistent judgments than when engaged in more deliberative, effortful processing. As a result, these decision makers tend to develop inferences or expectations about a person early in the information-gathering process. These expectations can affect social interaction between the decision maker (policy makers) and the stereotyped target (survivors/programs), causing the decision maker to behave in ways that inadvertently create stereotype-confirming behavior from the other group.

- Was this legislation drafted under pressured circumstances?
  - Tiring (e.g., long hours, fatigue), stressful (e.g., heavy, backlogged, or very diverse caseloads; loud construction noise; threats to physical safety; popular or political pressure about a particular decision; emergency or crisis situations), or otherwise distracting circumstances can adversely affect legislative. Decision makers who are rushed, stressed, distracted, or pressured are more likely to apply stereotypes – recalling facts in ways biased by stereotypes and making more stereotypic judgments – than decision makers whose cognitive abilities are not similarly constrained.

- Was there a period for gathering feedback? Were legislators receptive to this?
  - When organizations fail to provide feedback that holds decision makers accountable for their judgments and actions, individuals are less likely to remain vigilant for possible bias in their own decision-making processes.

**IF 2 OR MORE ANY OF THESE BOXES ARE CHECKED THEN THIS LEGISLATION REQUIRES STRICTER SCRUTINY**