

Checklist: Identifying & Reducing Bias in Addiction Treatment

Objective: To help clinicians identify, challenge, and reduce biases in addiction treatment, ensuring equitable, culturally responsive, and ethical care for all clients.

Recognizing Personal Biases

- ☐ Identify personal beliefs and attitudes about addiction and recovery that may influence treatment.
- ☐ Reflect on implicit biases related to specific substances, relapse, or recovery methods (e.g., abstinence vs. harm reduction).
- ☐ Examine whether stigma influences treatment recommendations or client interactions.

Challenging Stereotypes & Assumptions

- ☐ Avoid generalizations about who is "most likely" to struggle with addiction based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, or other demographics.
- ☐ Refrain from assuming a single treatment approach (e.g., 12-step programs) is best for all clients.
- ☐ Recognize how systemic barriers (e.g., criminalization, healthcare disparities) impact clients' access to treatment.
- ☐ Challenge assumptions about motivation and willingness to change, recognizing external factors (trauma, environment, culture).

Increasing Cultural Competence & Ethical Sensitivity

- ☐ Seek ongoing training in culturally responsive and trauma-informed addiction care.
- ☐ Learn about historical and systemic factors affecting marginalized communities (e.g., racial disparities in substance use policies).
- ☐ Ensure treatment plans incorporate cultural values, community supports, and non-Western healing practices when applicable.
- ☐ Adapt communication styles, assessments, and interventions to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of diverse clients.

Engaging in Self-Reflection & Professional Growth

- ☐ Regularly engage in supervision and peer discussions to address potential biases.
- ☐ Participate in ongoing self-assessment to examine how biases may affect client engagement and outcomes.
- ☐ Commit to continuous learning, incorporating new research and best practices into addiction treatment.
- ☐ Hold space for client feedback, recognizing when their experiences differ from clinical assumptions.

Reflection Questions

How can I increase my cultural competence and reduce bias in treatment?

What steps can I take to create a more inclusive and ethical treatment approach?

Am I considering systemic and cultural factors in my client assessments and treatment planning?
