

Reflection Guide for Practice Note

Beliefs and Biases

The College of Early Childhood Educators published the [*Practice Note on Beliefs and Biases* \(2022\)](#) to support RECEs with their understanding of beliefs and biases, and how they influence their decisions, behaviours and practice. This resource is designed for critical reflection on beliefs and biases to help RECEs apply their ethical and professional responsibilities as outlined in the [*Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, 2017](#).

Regardless of how you engage in this learning, know that you are not alone in this process. As social beings, we all have beliefs and biases about approaches to education, health, communication, traditions and ways to celebrate. We also have beliefs and biases about ability, disability, class, sexuality, gender, race and religion, to name a few. With colleagues or a community of practice, engage in collaborative critical reflection and work toward strengthening your capacity to promote equity, social justice, and anti-racist and anti-biased policies and practices into your workplace and community.

Reflection questions to deepen thinking

Take a moment to review the following reflection questions and consider documenting them to deepen your thinking about your beliefs and biases and how they may be consciously or unconsciously affecting your practice. Recording or writing out your thoughts and reflections is an opportunity to make your learning more intentional. As you review these questions, think about how your beliefs influence your professional practice.



Looking for definitions for certain terms used in this guide? You may find their meaning by visiting the [Canadian Race Relations Foundation glossary](#).

Identity

To begin, consider the multiple ways that you self-identify.

- How do you define or view your personal identity? How do you self-identify?
- How has your sense of identity evolved over time?
- Thinking about your identity, how do you feel in different environments: at home, work, in a shopping mall, grocery store, restaurant, salon, walking at night or in nature?
 - This is on my mind a lot because ...
 - I haven't thought about this because ...

Disability

The College uses the social model of disability when referring to children with disabilities. This model states that children with disabilities are disabled by barriers within society and therefore refers to children whose participation is impacted because of any physical, mental, cognitive, emotional or social barriers within the environment ([*Practice Guideline on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities*](#), 2019).

- What beliefs do I have about people with disabilities?
- Do I make assumptions that someone has a disability based on certain physical characteristics, actions or behaviours? Do I ever draw assumptions about a person's capabilities when I learn about their physical or mental disability?

- What assumptions come to mind when I learn that a child in my workplace has a disability?
- How do I respond to those who:
 - use different modes of communication than me (e.g., those with hearing aids or who communicate using sign language or other forms of non-verbal communication)?
 - move differently than I do (e.g., speed, with or without assistive devices or modified transportation vehicles)? Or those that use public accessibility supports, such as designated parking spots or public-transit seating?
 - think differently than I do (e.g., information processing or retention, ideas and thought processes)?
- Do I have any beliefs or biases about the decisions a family makes to support their child with a disability?

Read the [*Practice Guideline on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities*](#) and ask yourself:

- Do I assume the environment is inclusive and accessible to everyone based on my own abilities or on any beliefs or biases I hold?
- What do I need to do to change my practice to ensure the space is responsive to individual and groups of children?
- If my views of disability differ from those of the family, what do I need to do to work in partnership and keep the child's best interests at the forefront?

Gender Expression

- What is my view or understanding of gender and gender roles?
- Do I make assumptions about someone's capabilities based on their [gender](#)?
- What are some of the traits that I associate with girls and women? With boys and men? Someone who identifies as Two-Spirit, non-binary or transgender?
- What beliefs do I have about the way someone expresses their gender?
 - Does the clothing they wear or how they style their hair influence my beliefs?
- What do I do when someone's gender doesn't match what I thought it was?
 - How do I treat them?
 - Do I try to figure out their gender?
 - Do I make assumptions about their sexuality?
 - Why does it matter to me?
- Do I discuss gender in ways that accurately describe human differences?

Families

- What beliefs do I have about families and [family structures](#)? Do I make assumptions about:
 - unmarried parents?
 - interracial parents?
 - single parents?
 - 2SLGBTQA families?
 - adoptive parents?
 - interracial adoption?
 - parents' ages?
 - intergenerational families?
 - people who don't have children?
- Have I treated a child's family member differently based on their:
 - role in the community?
 - age?
 - education or profession?
 - means of transportation (e.g., car, taxi or public transit)?
 - employment status?
 - legal status or issue?
 - socio-economic status?
 - the area of town or the neighbourhood that is home?
 - appearance (e.g., hair style, texture or colour, tattoos or body piercings)?

Language – *Verbal, non-verbal, written and body language*

- Am I conscious of the many forms of communication?
- How do I develop fluency in varied forms of communication?
- How do I respond to those I have difficulty understanding or those who have difficulty understanding me?
- How do I respond when someone is having difficulty communicating? (e.g., a person with a disability, English or French language learners, people who do not speak my language and members of the Deaf community)
- What are my views about their capacity to participate in the program (consider language when it comes to the child, family and also to a colleague)?

Race, Ethnicity and Culture

Historical, social and political contexts influence our beliefs and how we respond to others. Canada has a history of colonization and cultural [genocide](#) of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples as well as a legacy of [enslaving Black lives](#). The history of colonization and slavery underpin present day policies and practices within society. Systemic racism has the power to taint services such as: health, education, child care, employment, immigration, housing, welfare and policing for racialized groups.

Ask yourself the following:

- What have I learned about Canada's history, including colonization, the enslavement of Black Peoples and the impact of immigration policies?
- What beliefs do I have about race, ethnicity and culture and where did my beliefs come from?
- What role does the news or media play in establishing or confirming my beliefs?
- How do my beliefs about race, ethnicity and culture influence my professional practice?

Read more about ways to co-create environments and practices that are culturally relevant, value diversity and promote equity and inclusion: [Practice Guideline on Diversity and Culture](#) (2020).

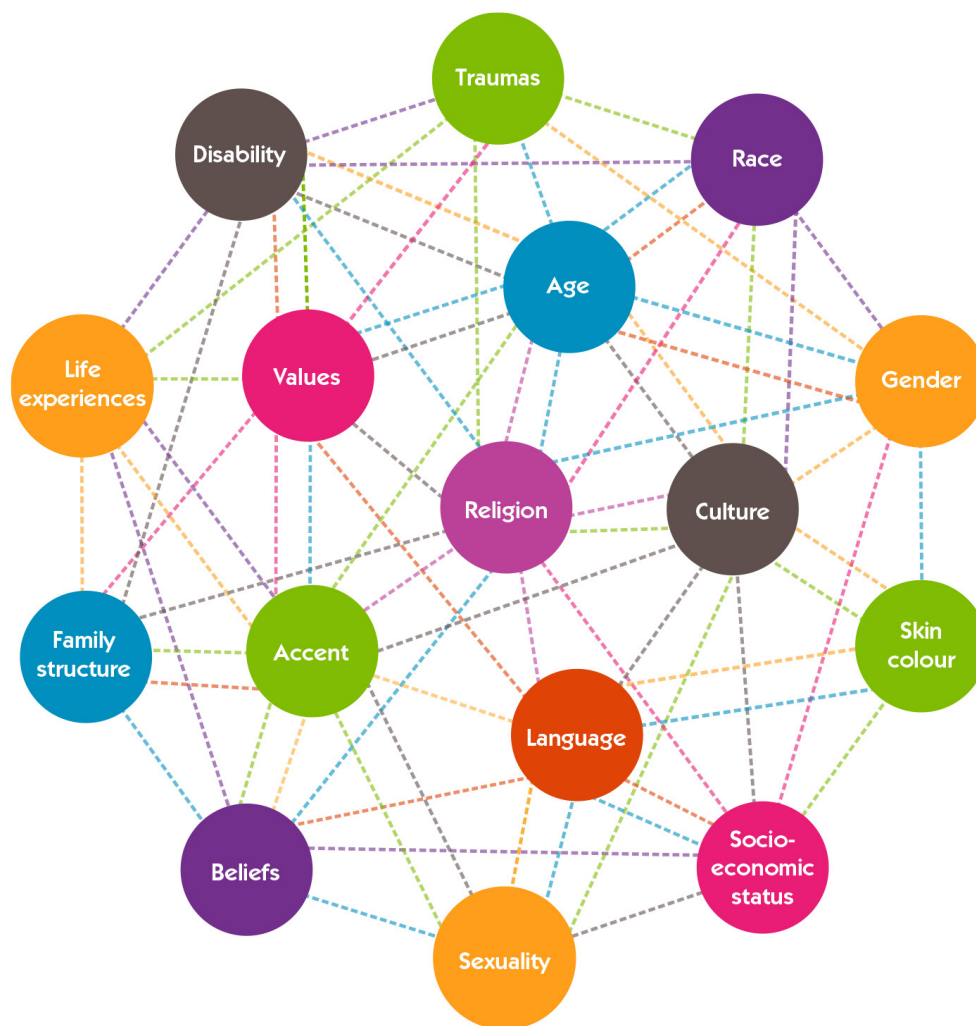
Creed and Religion

- What beliefs do I have about religion and those with different religious or spiritual practices?
- What shaped my beliefs? What role does the media play in establishing my beliefs about creed and religion (e.g., think about xenophobia, Islamophobia and antisemitism)?
- How do I respond to those who have practices that are different from my own (e.g., agnostic, atheist or non-practising, prayer, meditation, traditions, clothing and fasting)?
- How do I feel about the ways in which people communicate their spiritual or religious beliefs?

Moving Forward

Children and families may self-identify as members of many groups. Some aspects of identity will be visible while some will be invisible. One way to learn more about the identities of children and their families is by building culturally responsive relationships. This is also true for building relationships with co-workers because RECEs are as unique as the children, families and colleagues they work with. Members of a cultural group share similar beliefs, values, practices and experiences, yet individuals within these groups are diverse. With this in mind, RECEs, children and their families will belong to different cultural and social groups and will hold a wide range of beliefs, values, practices and experiences.

Refer to the figure below from the [Practice Guideline on Diversity and Culture](#) (2020) to reflect on and consider visible and invisible diversity. Recognizing that we are complex social beings, think about the various ways that people's identities may intersect.



Individuals can be targeted in groups with which they identify. For instance, a person may be discriminated against by their own racialized community based on their sexuality, gender expression or disability. Greater harm may occur if a person's identity is the target of multiple forms of discrimination.

For example, think about the similarities and differences that might be experienced by:

- A South Asian queer man and a South Asian straight woman.
- A child who identifies as Ojibwe and lives in their First Nation community and a child who identifies as Ojibwe and lives in an urban centre.
- A child who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a boy and a child who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a boy.
- A non-racialized family's experience with disability services and a Black family's experiences with disability services.

Consider these and other reflection questions you might find useful or meaningful alongside the [*Practice Note on Beliefs and Biases*](#) (2022). This resource outlines beliefs and biases and ways that you can identify them, and amend practice as needed to avoid intentionally or unintentionally harming an individual or community.



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Cette publication est également disponible en français sous le titre : *Guide de réflexion sur la note de pratique : Croyances et préjugés*

If you require an accessible format or communications support, please contact us at 1 888 961-8558 / communications@college-ece.ca.

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