

Managing Implicit Bias for Law Enforcement



About the Anti-Defamation League

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has been fighting hate for more than one hundred years. The organization was established in 1913, in response to a climate of anti-Semitism in the United States, but its founders understood that the best way to protect the rights of Jews would be to protect the rights of all people.

ADL has always been on the forefront of the fight against all forms of bias, discrimination and bigotry. And our work is more important today than ever.

We accomplish our mission by working with a wide variety of partners, from schools to law enforcement agencies to interreligious groups to government. Our Education programs have reached more than 65 million students and adults, and our training programs have helped thousands of law enforcement officials to combat bias and extremism and to build communities grounded in respect.

ADL and Law Enforcement

ADL works extensively with law enforcement, providing federal, state, and local agencies with more resources and expertise on issues ranging from extremism and hate crimes to building trust with the community and implicit bias than any other private organization. Together with education, working with law enforcement is designated one of ADL's two core programs critically important to the League's efforts to combat all forms of hate and "secure justice and fair treatment for all."

ADL experts and facilitators train thousands of law enforcement personnel every year in four content areas: extremism, hate crimes, core values, and implicit bias. ADL is deeply respected within law enforcement for its integrity and credibility, for the accuracy of our information, reports, and expertise, for the quality of its training and skill and dedication of the men and women who deliver it.

Goals of Managing Implicit Bias

ADL's Managing Implicit Bias for Law Enforcement (known initially as Anti-Bias for Law Enforcement) was created in the early 2000s and extensively revised in late 2017.

This program is designed to enhance law enforcement professional capacity to reduce the impact of unconscious biases. During this training, participants will deepen their understanding of relevant key terms and concepts; unpack assumptions, perceptions, and perspectives related to identity, culture, stereotyping and discrimination and identify how these concepts intersect with their policing practices.

The training provides a conceptual framework and equips participants with tools to enhance interpersonal and community relationships.

Specifically, law enforcement professionals who participate in this training will be able to:

- Identify key concepts such as identity, culture, bias, prejudice and stereotyping and their relevance to law enforcement practices.
- Understand implicit bias and how it impacts perceptions held by law enforcement and the communities they serve.
- Strengthen capacity to manage the impact of implicit bias.

Training Content and Approach

The program follows a sequential process that moves participants through a series of key training concepts, each of which build upon the other. The full curriculum is approximately 8 hours in length, though it can be adjusted (shortened or lengthened depending on the specific needs of the agency and time available or scheduled over a series of days).

More than a traditional awareness-raising course, this program leaves participants with a series of practical, actionable strategies uniquely designed for law enforcement professionals with which to manage the impact of implicit bias on their work. The program is comprised of three major components; opening activities, understanding implicit bias and managing implicit bias, and optional leadership-specific activities.

Opening Activities

ADL's approach to establishing a positive learning environment helps lay a foundation for meaningful engagement on a sensitive topic. Facilitators set the tone of the training in the first 20 to 60 minutes and link the goals of the program to the agenda, using icebreakers and discussion designed specifically for a law enforcement audience.

Understanding Implicit Bias

Comprised of a mix of presentation, discussion and activities and lasting between 90 minutes and three hours, the purpose of the second component of the training is to firmly ground participants in an understanding of how implicit bias functions, where it comes from, and how it impacts the decisions we make. In the extended version, participants will also become adept at identifying opportunities to disrupt cognitive shortcuts shaped by bias. Activities include individual reflective work, small and large group discussion and case-study work. The full range of activities address key topics such as diversity, culture, perspectives and perception, stereotypes, roles and identity, all designed specifically for a law enforcement audience.

Managing Implicit Bias

The closing series of practical modules ranges from 90 minutes to three hours in length. Facilitators introduce a series of tools and strategies for managing the impact of implicit bias on decision-making. Facilitators address the relationship between stress and implicit bias (introducing tools such as mindfulness practices to combat bias), and walk through a series of strategies designed to equip officers to address bias within themselves and others.

Activities include individual and group reflection, small and large group discussion and a series of law enforcement specific scenario-based activities (either individually completed or completed in small groups) to allow participants an opportunity to practice and solidify new/refreshed skills.