

BIAS Capstone

Developing SIMPLER Solutions

The field of applied behavioral science continues to grow, with examples showing up from the private sector to the White House. Seminal research studies that nudged individuals into retirement savings plans and organ-donation registration have prompted people from diverse backgrounds to wonder how they can use these insights in their programs and services. The goal of the BIAS project was to learn how behavioral insights could be applied to human services agencies that serve low-income and vulnerable populations in the United States. What did BIAS learn about applying behavioral insights in this field?

BIAS has now completed 15 randomized controlled trials in child care, child support, and work support programs. While each intervention was designed to respond to unique challenges faced by particular programs, seven behavioral concepts were used in almost every site. These seven concepts led to the “SIMPLER” framework: **S**ocial influence, **I**mplementation prompts, **M**ake deadlines, **P**ersonalization, **L**oss aversion, **E**ase, and **R**eminders. This handout summarizes each part of the framework. Practitioners and researchers may find this guide useful when designing behavioral interventions to improve the outcomes of social programs.

Behavioral science has the potential to help improve a range of social programs, but there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Evidence suggests that the SIMPLER framework is a helpful place to start. Let us know what techniques and frameworks you are using and what you've found most helpful by tweeting us @CABS_MDR @SIMPLERpolicies.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Persuasion by society, peers, or a person of influence can affect people's decisions and actions. People tend to follow what they think other people are doing.

IMPLEMENTATION PROMPTS

Encouraging people to plan the steps they will take to complete a task can move people from intention to action.

MAKE DEADLINES

Framing a future action as important and urgent by setting a due date discourages the tendency to prioritize today's needs over tomorrow's needs.

PERSONALIZATION

Efforts to personalize information or give customers personal assistance through a difficult task can improve outcomes.

LOSS AVERSION

Humans tend to prefer avoiding losses to achieving equal-sized gains, relative to a reference point. Framing the same policy or opportunity as a loss can drive behavior more strongly than framing it as a gain.

EASE

Studies in psychology have shown that people can process, absorb, and recall only a limited amount of information at one time. Thus, a central tenet in behavioral design is that making things as easy as possible can increase the likelihood that people will act.

REMINDERS

Reminders reduce mental effort by providing a cue that the task still needs to be completed. Repeated contact generally leads to stronger results.