



**Regulation Matters:  
a CLEAR conversation**

## **Episode 36: CLEAR's Board Addresses Unconscious Bias** **December 8, 2020**

**Line Dempsey:** Welcome to our podcast, Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation. Once again, I'm your host, Line Dempsey. I am currently the chief compliance officer with Riccobene Associates Family Dentistry here in North Carolina. I am also the current chair of the National Certified Investigator Training Committee with CLEAR.

Welcome back to our frequent listeners. For our new listeners, just a brief description of what CLEAR is. It is the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, and this is an association of individuals, agencies and organizations that comprise the international community of professional and occupational regulation. Our podcast is a chance for you to hear about the latest and greatest in our community.

In September, CLEAR hosted the Annual Educational Conference: a virtual experience, and the response was fantastic. Attendees appreciated being able to access all the content virtually since we couldn't meet in person. So, in January, we're planning to bring the Winter Symposium to you virtually as well. The theme of the Winter Symposium is **Recognizing Bias and Diversity in the Regulatory Arena**. We'll be taking a look at the range of biases that exist in our regulatory organizations and their effect, as well as the practical steps that regulators can employ in response.

Today, I am joined by two CLEAR Board members—I've had the great fortune of working with both of them when I was on the Board— Marc Spector and Staci Mason. I'm really excited to have them speaking with us today, so welcome aboard today.

**Marc Spector:** Thank you, Line.

**Staci Mason:** Yeah, thanks for having us, Line.

**Line:** Absolutely, and we can't be more excited to have you join us. I know the CLEAR Board has had some discussions about unconscious bias, even when I was still on the Board, and looking from the perspective of CLEAR as an organization as well as from the perspective of regulatory organizations. So, let's start this conversation off today with some background on the Board's discussions around

this topic and the decision to take this important step of addressing unconscious bias. I'm quite excited to hear about this, and Marc, we'll start with you if you would.

**Marc:** Thanks, Line. You know, it's trite to say that our world is changing, and regulators everywhere are working hard to stay relevant in the face of the public's expectations. Many of us are asking: What kind of regulators do we want to be? What kind of leaders? What kind of employers or colleagues or just human beings do we want to be? I know I've been asking myself these questions. And I've been trying to do a better job at listening, educating myself and understanding unconscious bias and systemic racism, and especially anti-black discrimination. It's been eye-opening and quite a humbling experience.

**Line:** Staci, what about you?

**Staci:** Yeah, I would agree with Marc. You know, as a multi-cultural, multi-racial woman of color, I've seen first-hand the impact of bias and discrimination in decision making within the regulatory arena and just in my everyday life. So at CLEAR, we are now asking how we can support regulators and their staff in this important dialogue. It's not easy to address something that you've either not experienced or don't realize the impact of the experiences on other people. So, the Board felt that it had an obligation to be a part of this learning and listening in order to better support others in their quest for knowledge. I think that's why we thought that it was important to begin with identifying our own competencies, our own gaps in knowledge and our understanding of unconscious bias—stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination and, as Marc mentioned, even racism; and that's a loaded word for some people. We wanted to do this to better understand ourselves and how we can do better as individuals, as organizations, and as society as a whole.

**Line:** Well, I know when I was finishing up my tenure on the Board, this was a topic that was starting to come into the forefront of our discussions. Can both of you give us a summary of what training the Board has already now received?

**Marc:** Well, thanks, Line. I can tell you that right now the Board is participating in a series of webinars on unconscious bias. Chris McIntyre is known for working with global leaders, including representatives at the United Nations, about how we can all do better as leaders. The Board began the first webinar by taking a good hard look at ourselves and then broadening our scope to include where the CLEAR Board of Directors is currently on its journey. We learned about unconscious bias, how it leads to prejudice and discrimination, and how all of that can impact our own decision making—how we recognize it and, when we do, what we can do to minimize its impact.

**Staci:** We had a second session, just yesterday in fact, and it was a really good session. It was a deeper dive into different perspectives of bias. When you hear the word "bias," you automatically think it's about male versus female or race or abilities or disabilities. We discussed how we oftentimes focus on one thing and not others; how we may miss social cues; and how we tend to rationalize our thinking, because we know what we know and it's always right. And then when it isn't right or someone points

it out, we tend to justify our intent without fully understanding the impact of our statements or actions on other people. We're very self-absorbed, and that's just because we're human, right?

We also talked about how we observe the world and gather data, how we decide what data is important to us, which one we're gonna use to make our decision, how we ascribe meaning to that data and make our assumptions—I think a lot of it is just, again, about what we think. And then we end up formulating conclusions and beliefs about the data that we chose, which then drives our actions. So you see how this is a domino effect. So it was great to hear about that and really self-reflect. We rounded out the session by identifying strategies for addressing bias in the moment, whether it's our own or we hear someone else saying it or doing it to us or others. So I think it was really a moment of, like I said, self-reflection—Do I do that? And if I do, wow, now I have a way of sort of stopping myself before I put my foot in my mouth. So that was very helpful.

**Line:** What a great way to kind of look in a mirror at yourself. It sounds like it's really interesting. Marc, you mentioned a little bit about Chris McIntyre as far as his background. He is going to be our keynote speaker at the Winter Symposium. Can you share a little about his background and what he plans to cover? I think he's doing the keynote, is that correct?

**Marc:** That's right, and I'm really excited about this. I share the enthusiasm because Chris is well known around the world as an expert on helping organisations (and their leadership teams) not only perform better but to be more reflective, insightful and sensitive in doing so. So like he's doing with the Board of Directors, Chris will work with us to develop the skills to identify biases in the assumptions many of us make that can create barriers to inclusion and fairness. The idea is to finish the day with a little more insight than we had before, with a genuine curiosity to learn more. And I know I'm really looking forward to that.

**Line:** Excellent. Staci, let me address this to you. Is there anything you can share about how CLEAR is planning to take the topic of unconscious bias forward for the organization itself as a whole?

**Staci:** Absolutely. The training the Board is undertaking now is going to assist us in beginning to understand the impact that unconscious bias and discrimination may have on the programs that CLEAR offers. We want to take a closer look at our communications and the language we use to promote our own events and offerings. We also want to learn how to assess risks and move to action. It's great to have all these conversations and trainings, but the reality of it is, what are we going to do? What's the action? And much of our learning will also guide our future strategic priorities. That's the ultimate goal.

At a minimum, our short-term goal is for CLEAR to be in a better position to do three things. We want to explore diversity and inclusion strategies and share those ideas on how to identify and remove barriers. We want to engage in meaningful discussions about bias, inclusiveness, discrimination and systemic racism in professional licensing. And we do that by becoming culturally competent and aware ourselves. And then, we want to establish tangible measures of success. We want to avoid the

anecdotal, qualitative narrative that is often used as an indication of success in the nonprofit sector. We want something that we can touch, maybe a living breathing checklist of activities. We don't really know what that looks like yet, but that's the goal.

Long-term, we are looking forward to growing in this space, and, as always, we want to continue to proactively identify critical issues. And we want to provide a dynamic, interactive forum for exploration of these issues, collecting and disseminating relevant information to our membership, as we always do. So, we want to make sure we're not just keeping this and checking a box saying we did this training; we really wanna provide value to our membership. So we're hoping this is a start of all of that.

**Line:** That's really great, and I think it's been great to get a preview of this important topic. I wanna point out too that this is something that's been on the Board's radar for quite some time, but now it's been thrown to the forefront with things that have been going on. I appreciate what the Board is doing with this. I'm certainly eager to hear more about this and looking forward to the Symposium. And I certainly want to thank you for being a part of this podcast. We were talking about this a few moments ago before we started recording—I think it's been many many years since I've gone six months without seeing either one of you in-person. It's a challenge, but I really do thank you for being a part of this today.

**Marc:** Thank you so much, Line. This is intensely personal and an educational experience; it's humbling. And the entire Board of Directors is behind it. Thanks for creating this venue for us.

**Staci:** I definitely echo what Marc said. This is a personal experience, a personal journey; but it intertwines into my professional life as well, and I know that is the same for most people. So to hear that the CLEAR Board is taking this seriously and moving in the direction towards learning and growing in this space is very important, and I'm very excited to be involved in it first-hand.

**Marc:** Well said.

**Line:** Absolutely. I know everyone now has gotta be excited for this Winter Symposium, so I want to make sure you know how to register. The registration link is on our website, which is [www.clearhq.org](http://www.clearhq.org). There's a link right from the homepage slider images, or you can go to the Events menu and choose 2021 Winter Symposium.

And I also want to close this podcast episode by emphasizing again that even though we can't meet in person, CLEAR is still here as a resource for you. Beyond the virtual symposium, CLEAR has launched the Online NCIT Basic and Specialized Programs. That shifts the content of the NCIT program into a mix of self-paced recorded modules and live instructor-led sessions.

CLEAR's webinar calendar is always being updated with new offerings, as well as the option to purchase access to previously recorded webinars. So, we've got a lot of information available to you.

The Communities by CLEAR discussion forum is open to members and is a great way to connect with colleagues to ask advice, share your experiences and expand your professional network. Especially when we are dealing with different time zones, it's a great way to connect with your fellow co-workers.

CLEAR's regulatory news blog is updated weekly with current headlines about what's happening in the regulatory arena, and CLEAR's website is home to a host of resources. So, CLEAR is always here to support you, and we thank you for your support as well.

And also we wanna thank you for listening to our podcast. We'll be back with another episode of Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation very soon. Thank you to our frequent listeners. And if you're new to CLEAR, please subscribe to us. We're available on a lot of different venues, on Podbean, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, and TuneIn. And we're newly available on Alexa for Amazon Echo devices, iHeartRadio, Player FM, ListenNotes, and now Pandora. If you enjoyed this podcast today, please leave a rating or comments in the app. Your reviews help us improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to connect with us. Feel free to visit our website at [www.clearhq.org](http://www.clearhq.org) for additional resources.

Finally, thanks to CLEAR staff, who are working hard behind the scenes to bring online and virtual programming to you and a special thanks to Stephanie Thompson, our content editor for this podcast. Once again, I'm Line Dempsey, and I hope to be speaking with you again very soon.

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