



## Critical Thinking about Policies, Systems & Environmental Change: Six Thinking Hats

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## 6 Thinking Hats

- Uses different perspectives to help think about a problem, priority, or issue.
- Allows a team to think about something in a parallel manner.
- Created by Edward de Bono
  - Based on the idea that most successful people are rational and think positively.
  - However, often times they do not think critically about an issue, thinking about it in different ways, using emotion, intuition, creativity, or a negative frame of mind.
  - Not critically thinking about an issue, priority, or problem can lead to underestimating resistance, unexpected outcomes, lack of creativity, and/or lack of alternatives or contingency plans.

De Bono E. *Six Thinking Hats*. New York, NY: Little, Brown & Company; 1999.

## Objectives

- The objectives of this activity are:
  - practice critical thinking using 6 perspectives about state-level policies, systems, and environmental initiatives that could improve the weight status of children and adolescents
  - develop as a cohesive team
  - increase critically thinking skills

## What Is Critical Thinking?

- The process of actively and skillfully
  - conceptualizing,
  - applying,
  - analyzing,
  - synthesizing,
  - and/or evaluating information

**National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, 1987**

## Why?

- Working as a team to critically think about issues and policies is important as we think how to:
  - solve problems
  - eliminate barriers
  - advocate, implement, and evaluate policies
  - and/or if we need to change or refine strategies.

## The Hats

- First, I will cover what each hat means.
- Then, each state team will decide upon a proposed activity, policy, and or service to improve child weight status.
- Your team will discuss the proposed change using the critical thinking techniques outlined for each of the hats.

## White Hat



- Focus on the data available. Look at the information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge or current knowledge in the field, and either try to fill them or take account of them. Analyze past trends and try to extrapolate from one population to another. Think about the evidence-base & best practices.

De Bono E. *Six Thinking Hats*. New York, NY: Little, Brown & Company; 1999.

## Red Hat



- Think about the issues/policy using your gut reaction and emotions, like joy, anger, right, wrong. Think how others who are not in your profession may react emotionally. Think intuitively about the underlying issues and how others might feel about the policy.

De Bono E. *Six Thinking Hats*. New York, NY: Little, Brown & Company; 1999.

## Blue Hat



- Focus only on the negative, thinking about the bad points of the issue. Be very cautious, defensive, and think only of the weaknesses and limitations.

De Bono E. *Six Thinking Hats*. New York, NY: Little, Brown & Company; 1999.

## Yellow Hat



- Have an optimistic viewpoint. Think about the policy in a positive way. Look only at the benefits of the issue. Think about all of the great possibilities that could happen.

De Bono E. *Six Thinking Hats*. New York, NY: Little, Brown & Company; 1999.

## Green Hat



- Use creativity to think about the policy. Think of creative ways to look at the underlying issues and the policy. Brainstorm. Don't criticize yourself or others when coming up with ideas or new ways of looking at the policy or underlying issues.

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## Black Hat



- Focus on the process. This is to help us develop step-by-step plans to reach solutions or ways to talk about an issue or policy, taking into account all of the hats you've worn today

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## Activity

1. Select a facilitator for your team. The facilitator's job is to make sure everyone is "wearing" the same hat and discussing the proposed policy, service, or activity from the same perspective and to lead the round-robin discussion. I will wear the specific hat during the allocated time period to make sure everyone knows what perspective to discuss.
2. Select a recorder for each group. The recorder's job is to jot down notes as you answer questions during each "hat session", especially during the "black hat" or process session.
3. Choose 1 policy, activity, service, regulation that your team may want to implement as part of the Children's Healthy Weight CollN.
4. For each of the first 5 hats, you will spend 4 minutes discussing the regulation or policy.
5. Take a few seconds to "put your hat on" and get into that mindset. Then use the questions as outlined to discuss the regulation or policy using a round-robin approach.
6. Your group will have 5 minutes to answer the "black hat" or process questions.
7. For the last 10 minutes, we will regroup and your group will report out on using some basic questions about what your team learned from the activity.

## White Hat

- Data/Information



- What do we know about the underlying issues?
- What do the facts tell us?
- What else do we need to know?
- What types of outcomes do we want to happen because of this policy? Are they realistic & achievable?
- How would we get additional data to support or refute this policy?

## Red Hat



- Emotion
- What is your gut reaction to this policy?
- How do you really feel about it?
- When you think about this policy, what is your first reaction?
- How do you think the public might feel?
- How do you think the media will react?
- How do you think others in state government may react?

## Blue Hat



- Negative
- Why won't it work?
- What is the worst case scenario, if this policy is implemented?
- What are the risks/limitations of this policy?
- What type of unforeseen or adverse outcomes could happen?
- Any other downsides?

## Yellow Hat

- Positive



- What is the best case scenario if this policy was implemented?
- How might this change things for the better?
- How would it benefit individuals (children & their families)?
- How would it benefit the overall community?
- How would it benefit organizations?
- How would it benefit state government?

## Green Hat

- Creativity



- What might the policy lead to next?
- Are there better or alternate solutions?
- What other ways could we address this issue?

## Black Hat



- Process
- Taking all of what you have discussed into account, what do you think about this policy now?
- Is it viable?
- Will it be accepted?
- Should it be revised?
- Should additional components be added?
- Should the policy be implemented differently, using other strategies?
- What are the strengths & weaknesses that you came up with?
- If you were at the planning table or talking with a legislator or funder, how would you advocate for or against this policy?

## Debrief

- Briefly describe your team's proposed policy, regulation, service, or activity.
- List one aspect of the proposed initiative that your team hadn't thought of before.
- How can this activity be incorporated into continuous quality improvement efforts for your state's initiatives?