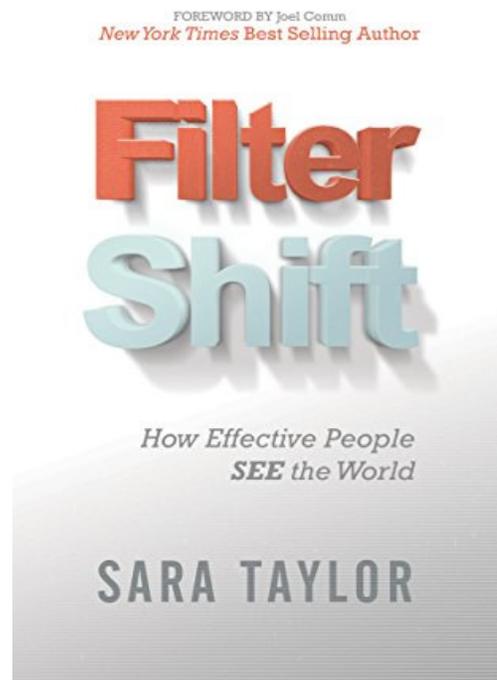


Filter Shift:

How Effective People SEE The World

“The problem is that we all do it – we all “pre-judge” the actions and beliefs of other people. Our brains are hardwired for it. So does that mean we’re all bad? .. he key is in the title of this book: *Filter Shift*™ . Our prejudices are like filters that drop down between actual perception (what we experience) and the attempt to understand what we experienced. The filter “colors our view,” you could say. And once we start recognizing the filters we use to understand any given situation, we can start making choices about whether or not a particular filter will be useful, whether or not it will help us communicate with other living, breathing human beings... And you may well find, in time, that it’s the most valuable skill you ever learned.” --Joel Comm, *New York Times Best-Selling Author and Futurist*

ANEW MINDSET FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERS



Why do so many companies struggle with diversity, management, and profitability? How come some people don't have the relationships – with family, friends or a spouse – that they truly desire? Why do people make bad decisions? How come the views of police and the African American community differ sharply? How do we get conflicted nations to speak to and understand one another?

The answer to these questions can be found by following the guidance in a new book, *Filter Shift: How Effective People SEE The World* (Morgan James Publishing, January, Paperback, 17.95, 132 pages, ISBN: 978-1-63047-978-7).

People who perform at a high level – whether in business or their personal life – know the secret to their success comes down to how well they navigate the biases that hold back so many. This is true for bosses, entrepreneurs, police, politicians, sales people, and just about everyone.

“The vast majority of us aren’t cognizant of how our filters control our thoughts, behaviors, and decisions,” says author Sara Taylor.

“Our filters create our reality. Filters involving people are rarely accurate, rarely anticipated, and almost always in control. A major consequence of our unconscious acceptance of the judgment provided by our automatic filters, whatever their source, is that so many of us end up with very strong opinions about other groups, even individuals, with whom we’ve actually had very little, if any, personal contact.”

Individuals continue to be persistently held back by their unconscious biases and misperceptions. Leaders continue to be driven by their organizational culture, rather than being the drivers themselves. Organizations continue to spin their wheels, unable to maximize the diversity of their workplace even with the best of intentions and years of hard work. *Filter Shift* explains the unseen dynamics that get in the way and hold us all back and provides a series of blueprints for success.

“In *Filter Shift*, I specifically outline five stages of development from “oblivious” to “highly effective,” using real-life stories and personal anecdotes which allow the reader to relate each stage with their own experiences,” says Taylor. “I then offer a step-by-step approach for how to move through those stages in order to respond more effectively in individual relationships, leadership decision-making and organizational dynamics.”

This all has a practical application to the business world. It impacts:

- Recruitment, retention, promotions
- Interoffice communications
- Client relations
- Securing new business
- Leadership and management capabilities

It also has a clear impact on every aspect of our lives, including:

- Our relationships with friends, family, spouses
- What we consume
- Interactions between the police and civilians
- Who we elect to political office
- How we perceive others in any setting

“For decades I’ve worked with groups to develop their cultural competence and become aware of unconscious bias,” says Taylor. “I used best-practice models of cultural competence development which includes 40 hours of intentional development work learning the intricacies of various cultures to develop. After doing that with hundreds of groups, I started to see that as individuals developed, they were each making the same key developmental shifts. So I thought, why don’t I just teach those key developmental shifts and when I did I was able to not only reduce that 40 hours down to 9, I was also able to reduce the negative interference of bias. There are several key developmental shifts and they are the key components to *Filter Shift*.”

Along with the overall concepts of *Filter Shift*, Taylor also describe:

- The quagmires where most of us – nearly 70% -- get stuck.
- Why the Golden Rule isn't effective.
- How we all frequently deny the obvious.
- How focusing on our similarities isn't helpful.
- The three specific Filter Shift strategies that we use to move from the ineffective to the effective stages and, in doing so, how we shift control from our unconscious to our conscious mind.
- How we spin our wheels because much of what we tell each other is “the right thing” to do, is actually not effective and is instead holding us all back.
- Why only 2.5% of us are in the last, most effective stage where we are able to filter shift.

Filter Shift, describes the notion of “filters,” how we create them, how we perceive the world through them, and how they control all of us subconsciously. It then provides strategies to make better decisions in business and real life, helping us to identify and confront biases, known and unknown to us.

“On an individual level we all have positive intent, for the most part, as we interact with others,” says Taylor. “Yet we still have conflicts and misunderstandings. The five stages of effectiveness help us to understand the source of this disconnect. Until we move to the latter two stages, we aren't capable of predicting the impact our actions will have on others. That leaves us with situations of positive intent and negative impact.”

Unfortunately, most of the time we aren't aware of the negative impact we have on others. In fact, between 95%-99% of us significantly overestimate how effective we are when we are when we're interacting with others. We're clueless and we have our unconscious mind to thank. That's where perceptions are formed, judgments carried out and decisions made all on our behalf and without our knowing.

“The vast majority of organizations lack women and people of color in leadership and even with strategies to advance diversity, the problem remains entrenched,” notes Taylor. “For those that have diversity rarely are they able to fully utilize it as a resource. In fact research informs us that actually very few diverse teams are high performing. That is the power our filters have over us. Because they are formed and operate in our unconscious mind that we can't access, they have free reign. They are, in many ways, our police, judge and jury when it comes to determining what is right and wrong, good and bad, professional and unprofessional. They decide for us and they decide without us knowing.”

Taylor reveals how we can move forward to make clear, positive, and fair decisions – in business, politics, social relationships or life.

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Sara Taylor

Biography

For over two decades, Sara Taylor has been helping organizations develop diversity and inclusion trainings, working to develop their leadership skills, increase cultural competence, make organizations more effective, and increase their bottom line.

For the past 15 years, as the founder and president of deepSEE Consulting, she has worked with HR managers, chief diversity officers, and high-level executives at 3M Company, AARP, Cleveland Foundation, Coca-Cola, Marriott International, General Mills, United Way Worldwide National Credit Union Administration, Ingersol-Rand, Seagate Technologies, Thompson Reuters Thrivent Financial, and many others.

She is the author of a new book, *Filter Shift: How Effective People See the World*, that explores how we actually make choices and decisions through various unconscious biases -- and how to change that.

Taylor is often asked by organizations to consult on matters such as recruitment, retention, interoffice communications, leadership, diversity training, sales and management.

Earlier in her career she served as a leadership and diversity specialist at the University of Minnesota for five years, where she developed state-wide diversity and leadership programs, created and managed a grant program to fund community-based diversity initiatives, and directed the activities of approximately 20 diversity and leadership educators.

She also served three years as the director of diversity and inclusion for Ramsey County, in Minnesota. She established a new department to lead D&I efforts for 5,000 employees. In developing and leading long-term organizational change strategy, she improved communications, external marketing, and leadership development activities.

Taylor is an active member of Society of Human Resource Management, Human Resource Professionals of Minnesota, Minnesota Society for Human Resource Management, Twin Cities Human Resources Association, Association of Talent Development, and Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research.

She's been featured in and quoted as an expert in *HR Magazine* and has had several articles published in *Diversity Woman* magazine.

Taylor earned a Master's degree in Diversity and Organizational Development from the University of Minnesota.

She resides with her husband, in a suburb of St. Paul, MN they have four children. For more information, please consult: www.deepseeconsulting.com, www.sarataylor.com, and www.filtershift.com.

Sara Taylor

Q&A

Filter Shift

1. **Sara, what inspired you to write *Filter Shift*?** I've had the opportunity to work with hundreds of groups and organizations to develop their effectiveness. For years, I've used a framework that is outlined in *Filter Shift* that describes five stages of effectiveness. One of the things that inspired me was the looks on people's faces when I describe that framework. It's a look that tells me they've had an aha moment and I can visually see that they now have a new perspective, that they see differently. That awareness is wonderful and even necessary to begin to operate differently, but after having that awareness, my clients began asking for practical tools for how to get to that last most effective stage. So over the last 10 years I've been creating and refining those tools to consistently develop that effectiveness. I wanted as many people as possible to experience not only those aha moments but also the practical tools that *Filter Shift* offers.
2. ***Filter Shift* is about our effectiveness, but I think most people would say they already are effective and don't really need another book or another model. Isn't that the case?** Actually, that is what many of us would say. In fact, the Cultural Competence assessment that we use shows us that 95-99% of us significantly overestimate our effectiveness when it comes to our interactions across difference. Stop to think about that. First of all that means that the majority of us have blindspots to our ineffectiveness and that the vast majority of us think we are much more competent and effective than we actually are. Second, we're talking about interactions across difference, and if we think about it, that means every interaction. So if I think I'm an A+ student when it comes to this and I think I'm in conscious control of my thoughts and decisions all the time, I don't realize that my lack of effectiveness is getting in the way.
3. **You share how effective people see the world. Why is that important to know?** Because it gives the rest of us a sense of what we're missing. Only 2.5% of us are in the last, most effective stage. The rest of us are unknowingly controlled by our Filters that operate in our unconscious, making decisions and judgments for us all without our knowing. Those Filters impact every interaction and when we are unaware of them while we believe we are seeing each interaction clearly, we are actually seeing a very clouded version through the veil of our unconscious. And when we don't know what we don't know, there's no incentive to see and respond differently.
4. **So, how do they see the world?** When we are able to Filter Shift we can see more complexity in each situation. Think of it as the difference between a painting that uses just a few brush strokes to paint a portrait versus a pointillism painting that uses a million different points. Since that complexity is coming from our unconscious, when we have the ability to Filter Shift we are able to see patterns of how our unconscious is driving much of our interactions and our decision making. We see that both for ourselves as well as for others that we are interacting with or others that, in an organizational setting, we are trying to lead or to serve. It's essentially, seeing the differences that are making a difference in any given situation.

5. **What is the first step to seeing beyond the filters we tend to operate under?** The first step is to acknowledge that our unconscious Filters are in control. Think of this question: what will your next thought be? That question stumps us because we don't know what our next thought will be. Research by Benjamin Libett of UCSF showed that the reason we don't know is because that thought is formed in our unconscious. And what does our unconscious use to form those thoughts? It's our Filters. That's a lot of power! And because they are formed by our past experiences we believe them to be true and right, even when they aren't. So that means they not only have that power but with the full reign and authority that we grant them. To get to the point where we can shift our Filters in order to be more effective we have to first acknowledge that they're there.
6. **It sounds like our unconscious is more powerful than we typically think. Do you have another example?** Yes, actually, it's another question. That is, "How many pieces of information do you think we take in through all of our senses each second?" Most people start out guessing in the hundreds, some move up to the thousands, but the answer is actually in the millions... 11 million, to be exact. Then the next question is, how many of those pieces of information are we aware of and the answer is just 40. That means our unconscious is not only bigger, but it's taking in information we aren't consciously aware of and maybe even information we wouldn't want it to take in. I think of it visually as a big sponge that takes in everything around it and then directs the tiny speck of a conscious mind.
7. **What is a frame – and how is that different than a filter?** Our frames are the things we are conscious of and the things that are easy to see. When I first see someone, I am conscious of their size, their color, their body language. They are also the things we typically think about when we think about a person's culture—food, clothing, art—all tangible and easy to see. Filters, on the other hand, operate in our unconscious. Formed by our past experiences, they shape our preferences, our perceptions and our habits. Many times, we focus much more on the Frames when it is our Filters that are actually in control and the deciding factor in our interactions.
8. **How can we go about making better business decisions?** We want to get to the place where we can see the full complexity of all that is involved in the decision and then respond accordingly. To get there, we actually start with ourselves. We start by seeing how our own Filters are influencing our judgement and do our best to look at that objectively. In a sense we need to slow our brain down. When we are asked to decide quickly, we only rely on our unconscious. But when we slow down the process and ask how our Filters may be impacting, we move that decision to the conscious level.
9. **You mention that many of us—nearly 70%--get stuck in the last of the ineffective stages. Why/How do we get stuck?** We get stuck for two reasons, The first is that we have socialized that third stage. We hear it all around us promoted as the way we should interact. In that stage our unconscious is still in control operating without our awareness. It tells us what to expect from others, but what we don't realize is that that expectation is based on an assumption of similarity—essentially, that their Filters will tell them the same thing that my Filters tell me. So we focus on that similarity and minimize any differences. Statements all around us such as, the golden rule—treat others as you would like to be treated. That's based on the assumption that everyone in the whole universe wants to be treated the way I want to be treated.
10. **You said there were two reasons we get stuck, what's the second reason?** The second is that developmentally it's a significant leap to move from that third stage, which is the last of the ineffective stages, to the fourth stage which is the first stage where we are able to see our Filters. Think about it as the difference developmentally between grade school and College. And that developmental shift isn't just about learning a new skillset, it's about acquiring a new mindset.

We begin to see the world differently when we move to the more effective stages. I can develop other skillsets—learn how to create a spreadsheet or move from an amateur-level photographer to a professional level—and in each case you can see my skills developing, but I don't have to also take on a new mindset as I do with this competence.

11. **Let's go back to something you said earlier about the Golden Rule. Are you suggesting that the golden rule is somehow bad??** The intent of the Golden Rule is to be respectful of one another but unfortunately, that isn't always the impact. And obviously, if our only other alternative is to be mean to one another, than yes, let's use the Golden Rule. But there's actually a third alternative and that is to treat others as they would like to be treated. Some call it the Platinum Rule. Because if you think about it, the Golden Rule is based on one huge assumption which is that the whole world wants to be treated the way I want to be treated. Essentially, it's assuming the whole world shares my Filters.
12. **You mentioned intent versus impact. Can you elaborate?** I believe we all go about our days with positive intent. We want to make positive connections, and be productive. I've asked thousands of people in my presentations if they agree with me and I only see heads nodding in agreement. But if we all have positive intent, then why do we have misunderstandings and conflict? Because few of us have the ability to match that positive intent with an equally positive impact. If I step on your foot with my stilettos, Who's going to decide if you're hurt—you and your scream or me and the fact that I didn't mean to hurt you. When we are able to Filter Shift, we are able to match our intent with an equally positive impact.
13. **Can you give some examples of what it looks like to operate from that third stage where most of us get stuck?** Our unconscious continually tells us what to expect from others and also tells us how to respond to them. What we don't realize is that to make those decisions, the unconscious is using only our filters, formed by our past experiences. Inherent, then is an assumption of similarity—an assumption that a) my Filters are right and that b) their Filters are telling them the same things. Since we trust what our unconscious Filters tell us, we don't question them and when we have misunderstandings, we don't go back and look to our Filters as the culprit, instead we look at the individual and label them disrespectful.
14. **Can you give us an example of one of the ways we socialize that focus on similarity?** We hear it around us all the time. I call the mantra for this stage is “A focus on differences divides and a focus on similarity unites.” So we say things like, “We all smile in the same language.” “We're all a part of the same race, the human race.” So we minimize difference and are even uncomfortable when people talk about or point out difference. I see this all the time as a member of a mixed-race family. When I am asked to point out my black husband who is in a sea of white folks, what am I supposed to say...”the 7th one from the left in the middle of the room?” No, I say, “The black guy.” What I often hear in response is nervous laughter because people are uncomfortable when differences are pointed out.
15. **Isn't this inauthentic—to be changing how we operate based on the situation?** Remember, when we Filter Shift, we don't become someone else, we just take on a different Filter in order to be more effective. Think of this analogy. If I ask you to send a message—same message but to three different people—your boss, a colleague and a kid in your life. Would you communicate differently and even use a different means to communicate? Of course!—likely no emojis sent to your boss. But, in doing so, do you feel less authentic? No, that's analogous to what's happening when we Filter Shift, we don't become someone else, we just approach the situation differently in order to be more effective.

What are Your Filters & Frames?

Our filters are:

- The stored information in our brain that our unconscious uses to evaluate situations and make decisions.
- Formed and operate in our unconscious, which we don't access, so typically are automatic.
- Created by our past experiences and become the lenses through which we view our current experiences.
- Typically much more powerful than we realize.
- Sometimes wrong.
- Typically cloud complexity.
- At times the exact opposite of others' filters.

Frames attract our attention. They are the things that are visible and that we can easily see, such as our physical characteristics – our race, color, gender, size, beauty. They are also fundamental behaviors and actions that trigger automatic filters to drop into place, priming us with illusions of certainty.

Our frames are:

- What we typically use to categorize others as “a part of” or “apart from”
- The things we can easily see such as our race, color, gender, size, age.
- Also the outward, visible behaviors and actions.
- What we typically pay attention to and focus on to make judgments about ourselves and others.
- What can distract us from what is making more of a difference and what is really in control, our filters.
- What we oftentimes focus on when trying to adapt to others, when it is actually our filters that we need to be aware of in order to be more effective.

Frames are what we are typically aware of versus our filters, of which we are typically unaware. Yet misunderstanding and conflict are often due to a difference in filters, not frames.

Filter Shift In 3 Steps

Filter Shift #1: Acknowledge these filters.

In this step we bring our filters to the conscious level.

The two key developmental shifts are:

- **Shift from subconscious right and wrong to personal accountability.** Acknowledging our filters and the power they have in making decisions for us helps us consider other possibilities, and also helps us to accept responsibility for those decisions.
- **Shift from bias is bad, to bias is human.** We are all biased and our biases are formed by our filters.
- **Shift from having favorites in people to having a preference in approach,** all while fully considering other approaches without judgment.
- **Shift from perpetuating fallacy to attainable awareness.** It isn't possible to eliminate our bias or our filters, but being nonjudgmental is attainable.
- **Shift from unknowingly offending to being able to predict reactions.** When we are more aware of the filters involved in a situation, we are more able to predict reactions.

Filter Shift #2: Assume Difference

Instead of assuming similarity, we assume difference.

The key developmental shifts happening with this second step are shifts to:

- **The Platinum Rule:** This acknowledges that others, operating with different filters, will likely want to be treated differently than we want to be treated.
- **A Comfort with Differentiating:** *I'm comfortable pointing out differences because I see the greater complexity, and I do so without judging.*
- **The Acknowledging Mantra:** *I see complexity and I don't judge it.*
- **Complex Differentiation:** *I have the ability to see greater complexity.*

Filter shift #3: Detach Filters

We tend to unconsciously attach certain frames to specific filters. Certain behaviors are good, right, or professional and others are bad, wrong, or unprofessional. To make decisions more consciously and to be more effective, we need to detach those filters from the frames.

Three reminders help us to detach filters:

- Assume positive intent: If my filter tells me someone else was disrespectful and I assume positive intent, then I need to consider that they are operating with a different filter.
- Shift from past experiences deciding for us: Since our filters are formed by our past experiences, when we detach our filters we're also shifting from those past experiences making decisions for us.
- Filters and behaviors are relative: Each person's behaviors are relative to them, not to me; they are dictated by their filters, not mine.

Three key questions to answer to learn if you are ready to adapt: Are you capable? Are you comfortable? And what are the consequences?

If the answer is "no" to any of those, then compromise with three key steps: Use preference; identify the difference; and outwardly acknowledge the difference and shared positive intent.

Filter Shift: The 5 Stages

Stage 1: Avoid or don't see even obvious differences.

In the first stage of development, we are oblivious to differences, even those that are easy to see. We are not even aware of a significant difference that is at play. When we operate in this stage we tend to avoid differences, or are just not interested in interacting across those differences. In this stage, we don't know *what* we don't know – we also *don't know* that we don't know it. To shift out of this stage, we need to start seeing the surface-level differences; i.e., the easy-to-see frames that are around us.

Stage 2: Judge differences – I'm good and they're bad, or I'm bad and they're good.

Our filters cause us to attach generalized judgments to particular frames. Yet since our frames don't determine how well we perform or what we value, when we only rely on our filters, unconscious ones at that, we are making a direct connection that may very well *not exist*. To shift from this stage, we need to balance the scale and focus on commonalities.

Stage 3: Minimize the differences and focus on similarity.

We shy away from pointing out our differences. Here we move beyond seeing differences as a threat, though we still aren't able to be our most effective. That's because we can't see the complexity that's involved in our interactions. We get stuck here.

Stage 4: See greater complexity of differences.

This fourth stage acknowledges different filters without judging them. Here there are two significant ways we approach differences more effectively. First, we are able to see beyond the surface level and experience greater complexity. Second, we see that complexity without judgment. For others – the majority of us in the third stage – what gets in the way is our well-intentioned, yet naïve and misguided, belief that comfort with different frames equals competence in our interactions across the differences. Until we reach the fourth stage, we're missing out because only beginning in this stage are we able to also see the bottom sphere of our filters. “The goal is to see our own filters in a nonjudgmental way. They are no longer the absolute (or obvious, commonsensical, good, right, and professional way); they are just one option. Once we can see our own filters in this way, we are able to see the filters of others without judging them as good or bad. We see how their filters determine their frames. Seeing differences in this way, we are more open to them and actually seek them out. To move beyond this fourth stage to the fifth and final stage, we need to practice approaching situations differently.

Stage 5: Adapt to that complexity.

Only in the final stage are we able to see from others' perspectives. This means we are able to actually SEE others' filters and use those different criteria to understand and make sense of (interpret and evaluate) the situation at hand. We're essentially able to think like others are thinking, which in turn allows us the opportunity to see our own filters from the perspective of another.

Testimonials

“I was tremendously impressed with Sara’s insight and ability to understand our staff and issues we needed to see more clearly. Sara’s presentation went far beyond any other cultural diversity training I’ve ever attended. Sara focuses on the core of human nature. She is an excellent trainer and group facilitator.” --**Leah Pigatti, Executive Director at Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc.**

“I enthusiastically recommend Sara and her colleagues at deepSee Consulting. In my role as an HR Director in a large organization and now Chief of Staff, I’ve benefited personally and professionally from Sara’s insightful consulting and outstanding training on a wide range of diversity and inclusion topics. Sara and her team are experts using the IDI and related assessments.” --**Eric Davis, Chief of Staff at Minnesota Department of Transportation**

“Sara is a dynamic and engaging trainer. She is wonderful to work with and will take the time to understand your needs and assess what will work best for your organization. She’s also just a joy to be around. You can’t go wrong with Sara!” --**Marty Raines, Diversity Communications Specialist at National Credit Union Administration**

“Sara Taylor is a dynamic and passionate facilitator of impactful diversity trainings. She is always a pleasure to work with and I would highly recommend deepSEE to any group or organization looking to improve cultural competence.” --**Nsombi Ricketts, Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, The Graduate School at Northwestern University**

“Sara is an excellent resource for diversity practitioners and corporate diversity processes. She and her staff are highly qualified in providing the means to incorporate and/or enhance diversity and inclusion at any level, within any organization.” --**Diane Fisher, Training Instructor at Bethesda Lutheran Communities**

“Sara has provided diversity and inclusion leadership training for a program for Nurse Leaders at The University of St. Thomas. The evaluations from participants were superlative. Not only does she have exceptional subject matter expertise, but her knowledge of adult education made for a very hands-on, relevant session. Participants left wanting more! I highly recommend.” --**Barbara Wonder, Director, Executive Education, University of St. Thomas**

“I’ve hired Sara a number of times to deal with cultural competence issues. The settings have been very different but each time Sara was able to incorporate effective tools to provide learning opportunities for staff and community members to discuss and address difficult topics. Her evaluations are always great and staff are excited about implementing what they learned.” --**Monica Herrera, Director of Nutrition, Health and Youth Development Division at Minnesota Department of Education**

“deepSEE consulting provided at cultural competency training workshop for our division with overwhelming turnout and 5-star evaluations. A subset of staff took the IDI assessment and received a private consultation with Sara. Sara is dynamic, engaging and trusted. Staff are asking when they can get more. If you are looking for a different type of diversity training that will...” --**Jeanette Johnson-Reed, RD, MBA, Supervisor of CACFP Compliance & Assistance Minnesota Department of Education**