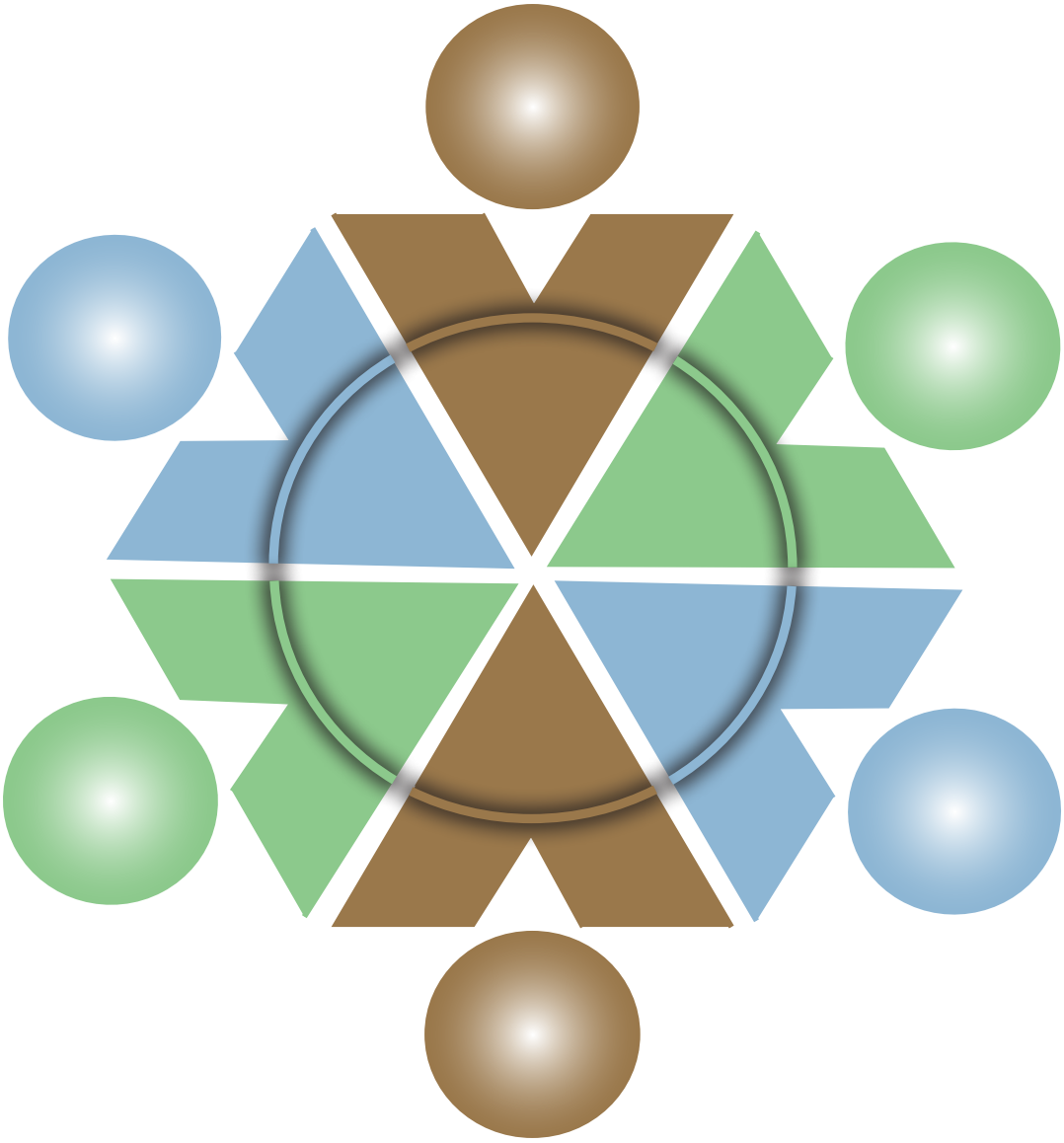
THE NABITA 2015 WHITEPAPER

WHO'S ON THE TEAM? MISSION, MEMBERSHIP, AND MOTIVATION



By:
Brian Van Brunt, Ed.D.
Aaron "Chip" Reese, Ed.D.
W. Scott Lewis, J.D.

This whitepaper being shared as a free resource and is published by the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA).

Additional copies are available for free at www.nabita.org.

©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 2

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS 2

TEAM MEMBERSHIP 7

- Core, Inner, Middle, and Outer Circle 8
  - Core Members 8
  - Inner And Middle Circle Members 8
  - Outer Circle Members 9

MOTIVATION 10

- Chair 10
- Dean of Students/VPSA 11
- Counseling Director 12
- Residence Life 13
- Human Resources 14
- Law Enforcement 14
- Disability Services 15
- Title IX 15
- Risk Management/Emergency Response 15
- Legal Counsel 16
- Faculty/Academic Tutoring 16
- Health Staff 16
- Student Activities 16

FINAL THOUGHTS 17

REFERENCES 18

ABOUT THE AUTHORS 19

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the NaBITA Advisory Board meets to discuss what whitepaper topics are most relevant for the field of behavioral intervention. At times, these are emerging practices or specialized issues such as threat assessment, mental health management, or compliance with federal mandates. Other times, we find ourselves returning to the core issues of training that remain a frequent topic of conversation for our membership. This year, the Advisory Board selected the topic of BIT mission statement development and the more intensive discussion of team membership and motivations as whitepaper topics.

College campuses are constantly refreshing their populations. Every four to six years, there is nearly a 100 percent turnover of the student body (though perhaps less at some community colleges). In addition, many faculty and staff members retire or accept positions at other institutions each year. As a result, BIT focus and composition can change over time with employee turnover; as can its methods for interacting and communicating with the campus community, leaving new students with less understanding than those from previous classes about what the team does and how to engage its help when someone's behavior becomes cause for concern. This whitepaper should help BIT teams refocus on the core issues of ensuring the campus knows about the BIT and its mission.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

One of the central tasks for teams is the development of vision and mission statements. These statements should drive the BIT's actions and serve as a touchstone for those times where the team begins to drift off course. A mission statement communicates (to the greater college community and beyond) a commitment to intentional action with a goal of ensuring safety and wellbeing. To this end, exemplary teams' missions have evolved to reflect a focus on pattern analysis, faculty and staff concerns, and threat assessment.

'...Exemplary teams' missions have evolved to reflect a focus on pattern analysis, faculty and staff concerns, and threat assessment.'

A vision statement defines what the team will do and why it should exist. Some vision statements have defined goals, while others are more general in nature. In either case, both BIT vision and mission statements should reflect the vision and mission statements of the institution. At times, these statements may be combined into a single, comprehensive statement. Most importantly, the statements — and the subsequent action plans — should be tied to the strategic plan of the institution.

For example, a team mission that reads, "To identify and intervene with students who pose a threat to the campus community," will be more focused on violence and danger to the community. On the other hand, a team that has a mission, "To identify and assist at-risk and struggling students become more connected to services," may have a stronger focus on student assistance and may even be concerned with enrollment retention rather than dangerousness. When considering the mission and/or purpose statement, the team needs to consider the scope and reach of their work. Once that mission/ purpose is identified, the team must guard against becoming the landing place for all reported problems on campus. Just as the mission statement defines the population and capacity of the team, it also determines what the BIT is not.

In 2013, the Jed Foundation brought together some key leaders in the field to create a document titled, "Balancing Safety and Support on Campus: A Guide to Campus Teams." In terms of mission and purpose statement, the document offers this advice:

'When considering the mission and/or purpose statement, the team needs to consider the scope and reach of their work.'

In general, the mission/purpose of campus teams encompasses:

- Gathering information about students of concern. This may specifically focus on threats with the potential to become violent (as is the case with threat assessment teams) or on a broader range of behaviors. As noted below, this may also expand to include behaviors by others on- or off-campus, besides students.
- Assessing the information about each case in a systematic way to determine the most effective response for that particular person and situation.
- Defining the plan/response to address both the needs of the student and the safety of the community. The plan should consider specifics about who, when, where, and how the response will occur.
- Implementing the response in a way that de-escalates a potential crisis, reduces or removes threats, and attends to the needs of the individual who is demonstrating disturbed and/or disturbing behavior. Note that for many campus teams, the actual implementation of a response may be carried out by other individuals or departments; the team itself often acts in an advisory and coordinating role.
- Monitoring the disposition of the case to gauge whether any additional follow-up is needed, whether the response was effective, and what lessons may be learned for future cases, especially in terms of implications for school policies and procedures (p. 3).

The development of a vision and/or a mission statement should serve as an opportunity for a team to engage in a discussion to define the team's scope and focus, and help guide future action. While drawing from other statements is a useful place to start, we

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

encourage you to wrestle more directly with how your BIT should be defined against the backdrop of your individual campus. In the 2013 Jed Foundation paper, the authors wrote, "Each school will have unique needs that a campus team may meet, depending on its size, history, resources, and potential overlap with other existing campus committees and procedures" (p.3).

Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, and Savage (2008: 47) suggest the following for a mission statement: "Identify a student, faculty member, or staff member who has engaged in threatening behaviors or done something that raised serious concern about their well-being, stability, or potential for violence or suicide." This type of statement is more appropriate for a Threat Assessment Team, or TAT, where the main focus in on responding to existing threats. However, given that the BIT mission is more preventative and educational in nature, focusing on addressing such behaviors before they become threats, that kind of statement is not sufficient for BITs. As an aside, many of the mission statement examples provided in the 2014 NaBITA survey had a similar, limited focus on threat assessment alone. It would be our recommendation that BITs focus on prevention and early identification of warning behaviors in addition to the assessment of threats.

'It would be our recommendation that BITs focus on prevention and early identification of warning behaviors in addition to the assessment of threats.'

The background experience of the team's membership also has an impact on the mission. Some BITs become focused on law enforcement and police response, others on mental health risk, and all seem focused and concerned with the legal and policy implications of their decisions. Regardless of team members' backgrounds, there should be a respect for the intersection between the law, policy, mental health, and law enforcement. This creates opportunities for departments to work together and reduce communication barriers.

Isolated communications occur when each department on campus focuses on its own individual mission, policy, and rules without seeing the members of their communities as part of a larger, more complex system. Individual departments that don't communicate outside their own walls to the detriment of campuswide threat assessment and behavioral intervention, are often referred to as operating in a "silo." Much like the tall grain silos that dot the Midwest, they are single structures serving their function but separated from the larger system of which they are a part.

Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldimann, and James (2011: 19) further define this danger: "There is always the risk of a 'silo effect' — different domains of behavior are never linked together or synthesized to develop a comprehensive picture of the subject of concern, conduct further investigation, identify other warning behaviors, and actively risk-manage the case."

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

TIP:

A summary of the 2014 NaBITA team survey results is available at *https://nabita.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2014-BIT-survey-summary.pdf*.

The following data comes from the 2014 NaBITA team survey results (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, and Golston) in response to the questions, "Does your team have a mission statement?" and "If you are willing to share your BIT mission statement, please cut and paste it here." Over 60 percent of teams reported having a mission statement. Several key themes emerged from our analysis of over 200 mission statements shared. BITs who shared mission statements often included the following:

- Scope of team reach (e.g., faculty, staff, and students).
- Discussion of the balance between the needs of the individual and the safety of the community.
- Defining focus on threat assessment.
- Defining focus on early prevention and intervention.
- Mention of connection to the institution's academic mission.

The following examples would be useful for new teams interested in seeing a summary of mission statements being used by BITs across the country. Our thanks to those who shared their team's mission statements in the 2014 NaBITA survey. The team names and identifying school information were deleted to protect the privacy of the respondents who shared their narratives with NaBITA. The term BIT was used for consistency to replace individual team names. These are offered in order of preference. While each of these has their own merits, the more encompassing statements are at the top of the list:

1. The BIT is committed to promoting safety via a proactive, multidisciplinary, coordinated, and objective approach to the prevention, identification, assessment, intervention, and management of situations that pose, or may pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of our campus community (i.e., students, faculty, staff, and visitors).
2. The BIT is dedicated to improving community through a proactive, objective, supportive, and collaborative approach to the prevention, identification, assessment, intervention, management, and coordinated response of student situations that may pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of individuals and the campus community.
3. [The] Behavioral Intervention Team is a campuswide team of appointed professionals responsible for identifying, assessing, and responding to serious concerns and/or disruptive behaviors by students who may threaten the health or safety of the campus community.
4. The BIT engages in proactive and collaborative approaches to identify, assess, and mitigate risks associated with students exhibiting concerning behaviors. By partnering with members of the community, the team strives to promote individual student wellbeing and success while prioritizing community safety.

 ©2015 NaBITA I All rights reserved.

5. The BIT is a multidisciplinary proactive campus threat assessment and behavioral intervention team committed to improving the overall safety of the campus. This is accomplished through a coordinated, objective approach to prevention, identification, assessment, intervention, and management of situations that pose, or may reasonably pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of the campus community
6. The mission of the Behavioral Intervention Team is to promote safety in our college community through a proactive and coordinated approach to the identification, assessment, intervention, and management of situations that pose, or may reasonably pose, a threat to the safety and well-being of the campus community. The highest goal is to prevent unsafe behavior and develop support plans for students of concern.
7. The mission of the University Behavioral Intervention Team is to provide a caring program of identification, intervention, and response while balancing the needs of the individual with those of the community. The BIT identifies students whose behavioral patterns have raised concern about their wellbeing; centralizes communication to gain a more complete understanding of the whole individual student; and, develops a collaborative outreach plan with campus and community resources to address identified risks.
8. In the interest of cultivating community welfare and safety, the BIT proactively operates to raise awareness of concerning behaviors through training, accountability, and assessments. The team connects, communicates, and engages timely response and intervention to empower positive differences in people's lives and to prevent violence. The team serves as a resource, providing referrals, consultation, and support to the campus community.
9. The BIT is dedicated to a proactive, coordinated and planned approach to the identification, prevention, assessment, management, and reduction of interpersonal and behavioral threats to the safety and wellbeing students, faculty, staff, and visitors. This committee will identify students who are at risk to themselves or others because of their behavior on campus. They may be a physical risk to self or others; they may be at risk because they are disruptive in classes, on campus, or in the residence halls; or they may be at risk because of poor choices that result in danger to self or others.
10. The BIT is a campuswide team that provides consultation, makes recommendations, and coordinates the university's response in situations involving students who engage in concerning, disruptive, and/or potentially harmful behavior. The team serves as a resource to the campus community and is designed for early intervention regarding behavioral issues to help support the health, safety, and success of students.

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

11. The Behavioral Intervention Team is committed to the wellbeing and safety of all members of the campus community. It has been developed to provide guidance for the students, staff, and faculty regarding how to seek assistance and report student behaviors of concern. In addition, it seeks to sustain a campus network where the campus community can respond proactively to situations involving students of concern by connecting those students to essential support services. It is the intent of the BIT that the campus community work in a coordinated and collaborative fashion to address students of concern in a timely and consistent manner.

TEAM MEMBERSHIP

As with mission statements, it is important to gather a team that matches the needs of the college or university for which the team serves. While data from the 2014 NaBITA survey provides some useful guidelines for those who are in the process of building their team, remember the importance of incorporating the unique nature of each school into organizational decisions. A school at which 68 percent of the student body is part of a Greek organization should include someone from Greek life on the BIT. If over half of the population of the university is known to the disability services office and receive accommodations, then having someone from that department on the BIT makes sense. When looking at team membership, it is critical to consider the context of your specific institution. A map or GPS device can serve as a helpful guide to travelers, but they must remain aware of their surroundings and adjust accordingly or risk driving into a lake, dead-ending at a bridge under construction, or missing a turn because a highway exit is not longer there. Likewise, BITs should use guidelines and others' statements for direction, but adjust to ensure the end results comport to their institutions' needs.

'A map or GPS device can serve as a helpful guide to travelers, but they must remain aware of their surroundings and adjust accordingly or risk driving into a lake, dead-ending at a bridge under construction, or missing a turn because a highway exit is not longer there. Likewise, BITs should use guidelines and others' statements for direction, but adjust to ensure the end results comport to their institutions' needs.'

Overall, three groups act as the "Id, Ego, and Superego" of the BIT, the Id being the base, primal response, the superego being the aspirational and moral philosophy, and the Ego being the balance between the Id and Superego. These are law enforcement/security, mental health, and student affairs, respectively. At a minimum, all effective teams will have these disciplines represented (with appropriate backups). In terms of team size, the 2014 survey found that eight to nine members was the average team size at most institutions represented.

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

CORE, INNER, MIDDLE, AND OUTER CIRCLE

One challenge of BITs is ensuring that they have representation from all relevant campus departments but is not so large that meeting, making decisions, and keeping track of who is doing what becomes impossible. For that reason, a BIT that is structures like three concentric circles, with one core group of members and middle and outer circle members who can be pulled in as needed is advisable.

CORE MEMBERS

CORE MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS:

They NEVER miss a meeting — that is to say, they are always represented because...

- *They have a backup, often one who attends meetings regularly.*
- *They're able to quickly reach other core members.*
- *They have full access to the BIT database.*
- *They're likely also on the CIRT or TAT.*

When it comes the core group, or the essential team members, the following are most commonly represented on BITs, according to the 2014 NaBITA survey:

- Counseling (92 percent of teams).
- Police/campus safety (88 percent of teams).
- Dean of students (75 percent of teams).
- Student conduct (75 percent of teams). (Note: Student conduct and dean of students are often the same person.)
- Housing and residential life (59 percent of teams).
- Case managers (20 percent, but a growing trend for larger campuses).
- Human resources and/or academic administration (29 percent, but important for teams that take reports about staff and faculty as well).

INNER AND MIDDLE CIRCLE MEMBERS

INNER CIRCLE CHARACTERISTICS:

- *They are generally at every meeting.*
- *They represent a constituency that is critical to the team (e.g., Greek life or athletics).*
- *They represent a group that is critical to reporting (e.g., faculty).*
- *They have a proxy, but not a formal backup.*
- *They have access to the database, and likely full access.*
- *They may also be on the CIRT or TAT.*

The next group makes up the inner circle members. Larger teams may include them as core members, but smaller teams often invite these individuals to join meetings as needed. There is a subtle but critical difference between inner and middle that is illustrated in the characteristics section that follows. These members typically include:

- Academic affairs (53 percent of teams).
- Health services (40 percent of teams).
- Vice president of student affairs (40 percent of teams). (Note: Sometimes this is the dean of students as well. At larger schools the VPSA should be a middle group member.)
- Faculty representative (30 percent of teams).
- Human resources (29 percent of teams). (Note: Inner circle for teams that do not act on reports regarding staff and faculty, but still may get them.)
- Student activities (21 percent of teams).
- Legal counsel (17 percent of teams).
- Admissions (8 percent of teams).
- Greek Life (4% of teams).

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

MIDDLE CIRCLE CHARACTERISTICS:

- *They are invited when they may have insight into a smaller constituent group.*
- *They may have insight into the subject of the report or reporter.*
- *They' represent a group that is important to reporting.*
- *They have limited, if any, access to the database (unless their other job requires it).*
- *They may be on the CIRT or TAT, usually in the same capacity.*

The middle circle is made up of individuals who are either invited to the team only as needed or are included in the weekly team membership due to a special population or contextual issue at a particular institution. For example, the veterans services coordinator may be part of the individual weekly team meetings if the college has a 70 percent veteran population. These middle circle team members include:

- » ADA coordinator.
- » Financial aid administrator.
- » Athletics staff member.
- » University chaplain.
- » Community mental health staff (e.g., psychiatrist or counselor).
- » Title IX official.
- » Risk manager.
- » Veterans affairs employee.
- » Multi-cultural affairs staff.
- » First-year programs coordinator.
- » Student success and achievement staff.

OUTER CIRCLE CHARACTERISTICS:

- *They do not attend meetings, but core or inner circle members may reach out to them as needed.*
- *They are needed to provide outreach to the student or some related party.*
- *They have NO access to the database unless some other part of their job requires it.*

OUTER CIRCLE MEMBERS

The outer circle members are those who are kept in the loop as needed. These are the individuals that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act would consider to have a legitimate, educational need to know some very limited information regarding the response and/or report, and may be asked by the team to provide some form of outreach.

One might argue that they are not really team members at all, as they will not attend the BIT meetings, but they are still important to the team's function. Some examples of outer circle members may be listed above — it is truly campus dependent — but others may include:

- » General faculty members.
- » Administrative staff and support staff.
- » Deans, assistant, and associate deans.
- » Academic advisors.
- » Coaches and assistant coaches.
- » Student organization advisors.
- » Family members of the reported person.
- » Friends of the reported person.

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

MOTIVATION

After reviewing what membership composition makes sense for your college or university BIT, it is helpful to review the motivation and challenges faced by each of the various individuals who may find themselves on a BIT. This section describes the central purpose and motivation that should influence members of the BIT, as well as outline some challenges they may face in terms of participating on the team. This is not an exhaustive list, but represents some of more common members of the team or those whose positions require additional explanation to be as effective as possible. With the team members described, it should be understood that each should have policy and practice experience in their respective area, and have the authority to take independent action when needed.

CHAIR

Team leadership is a crucial element for team success. A BIT chair must be vested with the authority to compel students to complete psychological and threat assessments, address academic concerns, and refer students to the conduct office with the recommendation to separate them from the university. A team leader without the authority to act on these issues runs the risk of identifying a high-risk situation and not having the ability to mitigate the risk by responding with an appropriate action. Dunkle, Silverstein and Warner (2008: 593) write:

> The team leader should be a senior student affairs administrator who has high-level authority to manage student behavior and who has a solid understanding of the institution's administrative structure, the institution's policies and procedures concerning student conduct, and the complexity of managing difficult student situations.

The chair should also possess a certain charisma and garner respect and confidence from the other team members and the greater campus community. A leader who does not have the respect and the ability to persuade and motivate others lacks the skills to properly manage the group process of the team. Eells and Rockland-Miller (2011: 16) suggest that a team leader should be "well respected and have outstanding communication skills and judgment."

Leading the BIT must be a priority for the chair that is well understood by the institution. As the institution places the appropriate emphasis on behavioral intervention, it must ensure that the leader is not over-committed in other areas (Warrell, 2012). Likewise, the chair must understand that s/he is leading a team and not holding a regular briefing

on what has taken place since the last meeting. By assembling the right team members, providing training related to each of their positions, and having a system of communication in place that allows lead-time for gathering data, BIT members will arrive at meetings ready to share their information and expertise (Reese, 2014).

The team leader should have a commitment to the team's mission statement and vision, as well as a keen focus on the BIT's strategic plan. The leader does not cancel meetings because it's summer or "there isn't anything to discuss this week." The team leader, like the leader of a police force or firehouse, has the responsibility to keep the team sharp and ready to perform, even during the rare "quiet" times when cases are not pressing or when the activity on campus has slowed. In these cases, the meeting should be dedicated to tabletop exercises and/or other professional development. Preventing campus violence and reducing the potential for at-risk students to escalate demands a certain level of vigilance and dedication, traits that must be sustained in the face of a team that may be tired, overwhelmed, or unmotivated.

The most common question here is, "Is there a specific position that should lead the team?" The answer lies above, but there is a trend that bears mentioning. BIT leaders most commonly come from student affairs. However, a recent trend of hiring case managers or team chairs as a stand-alone position may become the most common practice, especially at schools where the caseload warrants a full-time position. Schools should track time spent on case management to determine need.

Additionally, it is important that the BIT have a designated assistant chair or understood second-in-command. In the event that the chair is away during a regularly scheduled meeting or it is necessary to call a special meeting, this assistant chair must have the ability and authority to act in the chair's absence. The chair should look for opportunities for the assistant chair to lead the BIT. This can be done by allowing the assistant chair to set and send out the agenda, take the leadership role with particular cases, and deliver training to the team.

DEAN OF STUDENTS/VPSA

Both of these positions are commonly involved on BITs. They are often involved in the creation and leadership of the team, pulling together the various campus departments and groups needed to identify and manage at-risk students on their campus, and are often a first line of contact for faculty and staff who are concerned about students who may present a threat or may have violated the student conduct code. The dean of students /vice president for student affairs will be able to bring expertise in student affairs theory,

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

practice, and policy, as well as educational law related to students. Some schools will appoint the dean of students as the team leader because of that individual's involvement in student judicial matters. However, for the dean of students to be effective in this position, s/he must possess the ability to see through more than just a conduct code lens.

Depending on the size and make-up of an institution, the dean of students or vice president for student affairs may carry too much gravitas to sit on the team. If that individual's presence may prevent others from speaking freely, the team's effectiveness will be greatly diminished. Additionally, the VPSA may need to not be on the team so that there is a buffer between the upset student/family member and the institution's president. The VPSA can serve as an informal appeal (there should be no BIT appellate process, as it is not involved in hearings). In such situations, the VPSA must have a keen understanding of what the BIT does and how, but becomes a middle circle member. This scenario is more common at larger institutions.

A cautionary note: As VPSAs separate from the team, they must be careful not to become mired in the politics of a case, but remember that the BIT reached its conclusions using objective criteria. They should be advocates for the BIT's decisions at the senior level. For example, consider the case of a student who has hit the BIT threshold for a mandated assessment, but whose parents are screaming at the president, arguing there is nothing wrong with their child and threatening to sue. This student and his family should not find an advocate in the VPSA for avoiding the assessment. Instead, the VPSA should explain to the student and his family that an assessment or other course of action is important to the student's success and is a decision that was reached objectively. The VPSA should additionally work to ensure the college president understands how that decision was reached, and that granting arbitrary exceptions to BIT decisions poses too great a risk to the institution.

COUNSELING DIRECTOR

Counseling directors are commonly involved in BITs to provide mental health consultation and connection between the counseling department and the team. This relationship can at times be tenuous due to laws and ethics surrounding mental health professionals and counseling records. The JED Foundation (2008) notes that, "[w]ithout a student's consent, a clinician is rarely able to discuss information learned as part of the therapeutic relationship with campus administrators or even acknowledge that the student is in treatment … In contrast, a clinician can always receive information from any source (e.g., a faculty member) about a student who is currently in treatment" (p.10).

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

This may raise the question of how a counselor can contribute to a BIT, other than to gain information about a client or notify officials of a client who poses an imminent threat to self or others. For one, counselors can be great storytellers. Without providing any identifiable characteristics, counselors have the ability to share relevant case studies and tendencies of similarly situated persons of concern, which can be of great assistance to the team. In fact, counselors and counseling directors should be constantly be speaking in hypotheticals. If they offer information only when a student is not their client, they are tacitly admitting when a student is their client. However, if counselors or counseling directors just sit in the room without saying anything, then they are not a contributing part of the team.

Due to confidentiality laws and professional ethics, it would be ill advised to have the counseling director serve as the BIT chair. A possible exception to this may be at a school with a large counseling staff, where the director is purely an administrator and sees virtually no clients. Even then, that individual should likely not be the chair, but may have to if s/he possesses the BIT leadership characteristics noted earlier, and no one else is a more appropriate fit for that role.

RESIDENCE LIFE

When a school has a significant number of residential students the residence life department is commonly represented on the team via a hall director or director of housing/residence life. They are well connected to the community and have a first-hand knowledge of students and their social connections and habits. Student affairs professionals understand that human intelligence information gathering from those who are in contact with a person of concern is the best tool the college has at its disposal for behavioral intervention (Reese, 2013). On a recent posting for an assistant director for residence life position at Moravian College on HigherEdJobs.com[1], one of the related responsibilities listed was to, "Serve on the college behavior intervention team and assist in the counseling of students on personal and development matters."

The residence life representative needs to be someone with the authority to move quickly in room reassignment and contract forgiveness, and the ability to gather information from staff members. The director of housing or the deputy is the best candidate for this.

1 Moravian College, HigherEdJobs.com *www.higheredjobs.com/admin/details.cfm?JobCode=176020527&Title=Assistant%20Director%20of%20Residence%20Life.*

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR professionals have less frequent direct involvement in the BIT, but are increasingly being explored as a potential team member given the rise in questionable faculty and staff behavior. A truly safer campus must look beyond at-risk students to include faculty and staff as well. This is a hurdle for most colleges and universities, as the HR department does not always work closely with student affairs.

As an inner circle or core member, HR representatives can offer valuable information on institutional policy and employment law when dealing with a person of concern. It is often the case when the student is the person of concern, but the potential target of the student in question is a faculty or staff member. Other areas of concern are when a student is also an employee, such as a student assistant or resident assistant, or in the rare instance when a faculty member is enrolled in a course and their behavior as a student comes into question. And let us not forget Feb. 12, 2010, when Dr. Amy Bishop shot and killed three colleagues while wounding three others during a faculty meeting at the University of Alabama – Huntsville (Meloy, 2012). HR has employee records that can prove to be extremely valuable when looking at escalating or patterns of reported concerning behavior.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement officers are typically core members, as they are often the first responders to incidents involving violence, potential violence, and threats, and may have valuable relationships with local and state law enforcement. They bring knowledge of incident command and can be useful in reviewing criminal records and concealed carry permits for individuals.

Team members find that their campus police officers are rarely surprised when the name of a person of concern arrives in a report to the Behavioral Intervention Team. They have often already had contact with the individual in question through an incident report.

In addition, their training and experience in subject and witness interviewing provides the team with a wealth of resources and information. The events at Columbine High School in 1999 and the Virginia Tech tragedy in 2007 forced police to tactically change the way they respond to active-shooter situations. As a result, law enforcement personnel today tend to receive training in risk and threat assessment, and look for cooperative ways to deescalate situations before they become deadly (Dowis & Reese, 2015).

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

DISABILITY SERVICES

The disability services office is often the first responder to escalating behavior when a student known to that department becomes academically frustrated. Many mental health issues and disabilities, such as Tourette's Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and schizophrenia, can have symptoms that may be viewed by members of the campus community as being threatening. When receiving a report of disability-related behavior, it would be helpful to the BIT to be able to consult with disability services. However, there is no disability accommodation for behavior that violates the student conduct code, is threatening, or is overtly disruptive to the institution. But conferring with disability services on reports of students of concerns allows the BIT to have a greater understanding of why a behavior may be occurring, what intervention technique may be best used, and who might be the appropriate individual to intervene with the student.

Additionally, it's important to understand that when "information from a student's medical or mental health record is shared or used for a purpose other than treatment (e.g., decisions about medical withdrawal or disability accommodations), FERPA applies to the shared records" (The JED Foundation, p. 8).

Teams should be careful about having a representative from the disability services office as a core member, as the message this sends to the community may be that all students referred have some disability or mental illness. This is a concern with counseling as well, but adding disability services as a core member may accentuate that concern. They should have some limited access to the database, however, and the core should always consult to see if a student is registered with the disability services office.

TITLE IX

Unless the person on the team in some other capacity is also the Title IX coordinator or a deputy Title IX coordinator, s/he may be a middle circle member. That said, the coordinator should have access to the chair to put some reported students (and/or faculty /staff) on the BIT radar when necessary. Remember, reporting, being the victim of, and being accused of these types of incidents is traumatizing. The Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) will continue to provide guidance on what and how information should be shared without re-victimizing anyone or having a chilling effect on reporting.

RISK MANAGEMENT/EMERGENCY RESPONSE

A representative from risk management or emergency response may be included on the BIT as a middle or inner circle member when schools are fortunate enough to have an individual dedicated to emergency crisis response and prevention. However, it is

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

uncommon for universities to have personnel in these roles who are not already tasked with environmental disaster, occupational safety and health administration (OSHA), and often fire response as well.

LEGAL COUNSEL

Members of the legal department are less frequently involved directly on a BIT. Some schools choose to include them with the hope that their early involvement will assist the team in avoiding potential lawsuits. However, having counsel give advice or contribute to the team's decisions is fraught with risk. Diluting attorney-client privilege is one such risk. Additionally, the role of general counsel as the "guardian of the institution's liability concerns" can impede the team's decision-making (Who wants to be the one to disagree with the person charged with defending you in the future lawsuit?).

FACULTY/ACADEMIC TUTORING

Faculty members are commonly involved with the BIT to access information regarding grades and academic performance. They also often serve as the primary contact in working with faculty, department chairs, and provosts. As most institutions are concerned with shared governance, working closely with the faculty senate to select a team member is advisable. The contact could be a dean, department chair, or other academic affairs administrator, who carries enough positional leadership and influence to assist the team with gaining community buy-in for training and reporting. Additionally, it is best if this person has a good understanding and appreciation for student affairs structure and theory.

HEALTH STAFF

These staff members may also be involved on the BIT. This is typically dependent on the relationship with the counseling service. At times, the mental health counselor can represent both interests on the team, but a health center physician or nurse can be a valuable asset to the team as well. Much like the counselor team member, the health center representative may best serve the team by receiving information on students with whom they may already be seeing, and sharing hypotheticals that inform the team. Most often, health center staff members (e.g., nurses, physician's assistants, and doctors) serve as inner or middle circle members.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A member of the student activities unit may also be included on the BIT, since this department is often well connected to campus clubs, organizations, and Greek life. While the connection and information s/he brings may be useful, inclusion of someone from this group may raise concerns that a team may be getting too large to quickly

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

and confidentially address risk. Of course, as mentioned earlier, if a particular unit represents a significant percentage of the campus population, an exception may be worth making. While there may be a particular situation when the team leader would ask that student activities staff members attend a meeting, the dean of students/VPSA should otherwise be able to represent this group.

With all these distinctions between the circles, teams should consider bringing core, inner, and middle (and maybe even some select outer) circle members together once or twice a year to engage in training, do table top exercises, discuss protocols, etc.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The creation of a BIT is often a daunting task for new student affairs professionals to undertake. It is our hope that this whitepaper provides a useful starting place when considering the mission and motivation of the team, and its composition to create a BIT that fits its institution's needs and is aligned with established national trends. While there is no perfect mission statement or exact membership roster that we can offer through NaBITA, we hope this paper provides the insight and guidance needed to determine those answers for your campus.

REFERENCES

Deisinger, G., Randazzo, M., O'Neill, D., and Savage, J. (2008). The Handbook For Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams. Applied Risk Management, LLC.

Dowis, D. and Reese, A. (2015). Analysis of the Involvement and Contributions of Criminal Justice Programs and Public Safety Departments to Threat and Risk Assessment Teams in Higher Education. Paper presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Conference, Orlando, FL.

Dunkle, J. H., Silverstein, Z. B., and Warner S. L. (2008). Managing Violent and Other Troubling Students: The Role of Threat Assessment Teams on Campus. Journal of College and University Law, 34 (3): 585–636.

Eells, G.T. and Rockland-Miller, H.S. (2011). Assessing and Responding to Disturbed and Disturbing Students: Understanding the Role of Administrative Teams in Institutions of Higher Education. Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 25:8-23.

Meloy, J., Hoffmann, J., Guldimann, A., and James, D. (2011). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment: An Exploration and Suggested Typology. Behavioral Sciences and the Law.

Meloy, R. (2012, December). Eight Warning Behaviors of Violence. Paper presented at the 4th Annual NaBITA Conference, Bonita Springs, FL.

Reese, A. (2013). An Evaluation of the Behavioral Intervention Team for a Georgia Regional University. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Argosy University – Atlanta.

Reese, A. (2014). Coaching for the BIT Chair: Creating an Environment of Clam and Directed Leadership. 6th Annual NaBITA Campus Threat Management Institute, Bonita Spring, FL.

Van Brunt, B., Sokolow, B., Lewis, W., Schuster, S., and Golston, A. (2014). NaBITA Team Survey. *www.nabita.org.*

The Jed Foundation. Student Mental Health and the Law: A Resource for Institutions of Higher Education. New York, NY: The Jed Foundation, 2008.

Warrell, M. (2012). Over-Committed? 3 Questions to Ask Yourself Before Saying Yes. *www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2012/09/26/over-committed-3-questions-to-ask-yourself-before-saying-yes/*.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



BRIAN VAN BRUNT, ED.D.

Brian Van Brunt, Ed.D. is the senior executive vice president for professional program development with The NCHERM Group, LLC. He is past-president of the American College Counseling Association (ACCA), the 2015 president of (NaBITA), editor of The Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention (J-BIT), and managing editor for *Student Affairs eNews (SAeN)*. He has a doctoral degree in counseling supervision and education from the University of Sarasota/Argosy and a master's degree in counseling and psychological services from Salem State University. Van Brunt has served as the director of counseling at New England College and Western Kentucky University. He is the author of several books, including, *Ending Campus Violence: New Approaches in Prevention, A Faculty Guide to Addressing Disruptive and Dangerous Behavior*, and *Ending Campus Violence: New Approaches to Prevention.* Van Brunt developed the Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35), a starting place for law enforcement, clinical staff, and administrators to conduct a more standardized, research-based violence risk assessment with individuals determined to be at an increased risk.



W. SCOTT LEWIS, J.D.

W. Scott Lewis, J.D. is a partner with The NCHERM Group, LLC. He served as the 2013-2014 president of NaBITA, and is a founder and advisory board member of the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA). He is one of the most in-demand higher education risk management consultants in the country. Previously, he served as special advisor to Saint Mary's College in South Bend, Ind., and as assistant vice provost at the University of South Carolina, where he was also on faculty. Lewis' faculty work includes courses in education, law, political science, and business. He brings more than 20 years of experience as a student affairs administrator, faculty member, and consultant in higher education. He is a frequent keynote and plenary speaker, nationally recognized for his work on Behavioral Intervention/Threat Assessment Teams for students in crisis and distress, Title VII, and Title IX issues. He is also noted for his work in the area of classroom management and dealing with disruptive students (and parents), and has trained thousands of faculty and staff members. He presents regularly throughout the country, assisting colleges and universities with legal, judicial, and risk management issues, as well as policy development and implementation. He serves as an author and editor in a number of areas, including legal issues in higher education, campus safety and student development, campus conduct board training, and other higher education issues.

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.



AARON "CHIP" REESE, ED.D.

Aaron "Chip" Reese, Ed.D. is the president-elect of NaBITA and an Advisory Board member. He is a past-chair of the University System of Georgia, Regents Advisory Committee for Student Conduct Officers, and a founding member of the Georgia College Suicide Prevention Coalition. He also serves on the editorial board for *The Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention (J-BIT)*, and as a faculty member with the NaBITA Campus Threat Management Institute. Chip earned a doctorate degree in educational leadership from Argosy University/Atlanta and a M.Ed. in administration and supervision from Clemson University. He spent nearly 20 years as a college baseball coach before moving into higher education administration as dean of students. Currently, Reese is the assistant vice president for student affairs and dean of students at Columbus State University, and serves on the graduate faculty teaching in the Doctorate in Curriculum and Leadership program. He is the chair of the university's Behavioral Intervention Team and consults with other college and university BITs around the country. Chip has developed an operations manual for BITs and the Actionable Case Workflow Cart, which serve to assist BITs in developing, managing, and implementing their team policies and practices.

 ©2015 NaBITA | All rights reserved.

About NaBITA

The vision of the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) is to make our campuses and workplaces safer environments where development, education, and caring intervention are fostered and encouraged. NaBITA brings together professionals from multiple disciplines who are engaged in the essential function of behavioral intervention in schools, on college campuses, and in corporations and organizations for mutual support and shared learning. Whether it is to combat bullying, prevent violence, support individuals with disabilities, empower the success of those suffering from mental health challenges, or assist those who are in crisis, our members are joined in common purpose and exploration of best practices.

NaBITA.org

the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association

The NCHERM Group, LLC

Systems-level solutions for safer schools and campuses

© 2015 THE NCHERM GROUP, LLC.,
AND THE NATIONAL BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM ASSOCIATION.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.