

Standards for Behavioral Intervention Teams

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Abstract

Behavioral Intervention Teams have been around for decades, with formalization of such teams occurring around 2007-2008. The standards that guide these teams allow those in the K–12 and college/university settings to help reduce bias, improve consistency in process, manage mental health crises, and focus on violence and suicide in school settings. The standards were developed with three central areas of standardization in mind; structural elements, process elements and quality assurance and assessment. These standards are a starting place for teams and will provide a baseline for future updates and additions. The authors encourage individuals, organizations, school systems and college/universities to share comments and suggestions for improvement.

Introduction

As in any new field, the establishment of guiding principles is an informative and necessary process. These principles give us important information about the values and beliefs that drive the field forward and provide a roadmap upon which resources, case studies, policies, procedures, and best practices are created. Guiding principles allow for continuity within the field, and a solid base upon which future behavioral intervention teams can grow. The work is challenging, but necessary if Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT) are to be successful in their primary tasks — the identification and support of students in distress.

In any new field, it is important to develop guiding principles. For the field of behavioral intervention, schools use various rubrics and tools, such as “The Core Q¹⁰ (Van Brunt, 2014a),” “The Book on BIT” (Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014), “Brief BITs” case studies (Van Brunt, 2017), and “Best BITs” (Van Brunt, 2016b) thematic tips and advice. As several national surveys have been completed (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Van Brunt, 2014b; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; and Schiemann, 2018) and the *Journal of Behavioral Intervention Teams (JBIT)* expanded its research, it became clear that there was a need for the field to have a concise document outlining a set of professional standards related to the work of Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs).

These professional standards are provided as national guidelines for the structure, process, and assessment of the BIT. These standards are based on academic research, clinical studies, law enforcement reports, governmental investigations, and campus best practices. Ultimately, these standards will enhance BIT functioning and a school’s ability to review and reflect on current BIT practices.

These standards have been developed through the analysis and synthesis of BIT research (HEMHA, 2013; Van Brunt, 2012a; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simions, 2010; Deisinger, Randazzo, O’Neill, & Savage, 2008), as well as a review of surveys assessing the structure and processes of BITs (Schiemann, 2018; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; Van Brunt, 2014b; Golston, 2015; Mardis, Sullivan, & Gamm, 2013; Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Gamm, Mardis, & Sullivan, 2011; Cao, 2011; and Campus Safety and Security Project, 2009).

Three Elements

The authors reviewed research and survey data and brought their varied experience from law enforcement, legal affairs, mental health, student conduct, and higher education administration to develop a set of standards for teams in the K–12 and college environment. Three documents were created: 1) a two-page summary sheet, 2) an

11-page white paper outlining the standards with minimal footnote citations, and 3) this detailed research paper with full citations.

The standards are divided into three sections: structural, process, and quality assurance and assessment. *Structural elements* describe the team’s core qualities, such as the team name, leadership, membership, organizational structure, meeting schedule, mission, scope, policy/procedure manual and budget. *Process elements* describe the team’s use of an objective risk rubric, intervention and case management approach, advertising and marketing, record keeping, team training and the use of threat assessment tools. *Quality assurance and assessment* focuses on supervision of BIT team members, the creation of reports, student satisfaction surveys and the development of a BIT audit plan.

Structural Elements

Standard 1. Define BIT: Behavioral Intervention Teams are small groups of school officials who meet regularly to collect and review concerning information about at-risk community members and develop intervention plans to assist them (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; Golston, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Van Brunt, 2014; Van Brunt, 2012a; Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simions, 2010; and Delworth, 2009).

BITs engage in three main functions: 1) gathering data from the individual and community; 2) analyzing this data using objective rubrics, tools, and assessments; and 3) intervening and following up with the student or community member based on the level of risk identified during the assessment process (Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Van Brunt, 2014). Assessment should be an ongoing and circular process for all functions of the BIT. For example, a BIT should assess any interventions based on their effectiveness, context, new data, and evaluation of risk. As the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation write (2017), “threat management is a dynamic process, and strategies will often require adjustments to enhance success. Once a strategy is implemented, this begins a period of reassessment, during which the management plan’s effectiveness is evaluated and changes can be made” (p. 67).

Standard 2. Prevention vs. Threat Assessment: Schools have an integrated team that addresses early intervention cases as well as threat assessment cases (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; Van Brunt, 2012a; Jarvis & Scherer, 2015). Instead of having separate threat assessment/violence risk assessment teams and BIT/CARE teams, it is more effective to see threat assessment (TA) as a component within the BIT/CARE team.

Having one team that handles CARE and TA cases ensures inclusive training, streamlines database management, ensures that

the team is already aware of critical information and simplifies marketing and advertising efforts, which allows for a more captive audience. A shared team also reduces potential duplication of effort often found when maintaining two separate teams and allows for the early identification, assessment and management of students of concern.

If a school uses a separate BIT and TA team, there should be some overlap in team membership to ensure accurate communication across teams. Since CARE Teams/BITS are designed to identify early indicators of escalating and concerning behaviors, they are often able to identify and intervene before threats are formalized. Early access to collaborative information sharing is critical if the TA is going to be enacted, “An understanding of information sharing thresholds (both internal and external to any threat assessment team) BEFORE a situation arises is likely the best path to overcome obstacles that will inevitably, and possibly unnecessarily, arise in the heat of an emergent threat” (Jarvis & Scherer, 2015, p. 17).

Standard 3. Team Name: Team names communicate the role and function in a way that resonates with the campus community (Schiemann, 2018; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; Jarvis & Scherer, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Van Brunt, 2014; Van Brunt, 2012a; and HEMHA, 2013).

Team names vary from school to school. Common team names are Behavioral Intervention Team, Student of Concern Teams, and CARE Team. In 2013, the HEMHA wrote that, “naming the team is the first and most visible communication of the team’s purpose, so the name should be chosen with care. Ideally, it should accurately capture the team’s scope and purpose, avoid stigma, and avoid being inflammatory” (Dickerson, 2010, p.8).

Team names should avoid overly tactical or law enforcement terminology that could reduce reporting for non-direct threat cases. Team names should also avoid cliché or odd acronyms, such as Threat Assessment and Behavioral Intervention Campus Awareness Team (TABI-CAT). Choosing a name that will resonate with your unique campus climate and community is important. The name of your team should communicate the role and function, so that students, faculty, and staff members can understand the purpose of the team simply by knowing the name.

Schools should have a team name that reflects the seriousness of the work the BIT performs but not be so judicial that it has a chilling effect on reporters. Since many teams teach and train the community about potential violence, the team’s name should reflect a caring and supportive nature. The teaching and training

aspect of the BIT is supported in a 2015 FBI report that states, “Open and on-going communication to discuss the potential of these events occurring in your community may be the single most effective preventative strategy to pursue. By doing so, vulnerabilities, opportunities, challenges to be overcome in response plans, and similar issues may be identified” (Jarvis & Scherer, p. 17).

Standard 4. Team Leadership: Team leaders serve to bring the team together and keep discussions productive and focused while maintaining a long-term view of team development and education (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; Van Brunt, 2012a; Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Van Brunt, 2014; Dunkle, Silverstein, & Warner, 2008; and Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011).

Good leadership is critical to BITS. Homeland Security and the Secret Service make this a requirement in their 2018 guidance, stating that, “the team needs to have a specifically designated leader. The position is usually occupied by a senior administrator within the school” (National Threat Assessment Center, p. 3). When seen as a part-time role, leaders are typically drawn from the Dean of Students or Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) in college and university settings, and Principal, Superintendent, or Assistant Principal in K–12 systems and schools (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Van Brunt, 2014b; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; and Schiemann, 2018). When seen as a full-time role, case managers or Directors of Student Support Services have often fit the bill (Schiemann, 2018).

Dunkle, Silverstein, and Warner (2008) 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” (p. 593). Eells and Rockland-Miller (2011) suggest that a team leader should strive to be “well respected and have outstanding communication skills and judgment” (p. 16).

In the 2015 NaBITA white paper, Van Brunt, Reese, and Lewis write, “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” (p. 10).

BITs should have a permanent chair who understands the big picture and keeps the team focused, functioning, and on task. A good leader has the ability to bring a team in line with best-practice standards and implement a collaborative management approach, in which diverse opinions and perspectives are brought seamlessly together to problem-solve. By extension, the team leader should be willing to adopt a multi-component philosophy of decision-making, rather than unilaterally making key decisions. In keeping up with cases, team members may lose focus on needs for ongoing training, conducting tabletop exercises, and keeping policies and procedures up to date. Ideally, the chair will be a person to whom others are drawn and who inspires a sense of loyalty and a desire to follow; has the ability to develop consistency and reliability among team members; and can establish trust and positive communication within the team and with others around campus (Van Brunt, Reese, & Lewis, 2015; and Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012).

Standard 5. Team Membership: Teams are comprised of at least five but no more than 10 members, and should at a minimum include: the Dean of Students and/or Vice President of Student Affairs (or Principal or Assistant Principal in K–12 settings), a mental health care employee (guidance counselor or school psychologist in K–12), a student conduct staff member, and a police/law enforcement officer (or School Resource Officer in K–12) (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Van Brunt, 2014b; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; and Schiemann, 2018).

Teams should be multi-disciplinary in nature (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ/FBI, 2017; Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Van Brunt, 2014; Van Brunt, 2012a; and Cornell, 2009; Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008). The DOJ and FBI (2017) write, “Highly effective teams facilitate collaboration, coordination, and communication across various parts of organizations or communities to address persons of concern and threats of targeted violence” (p. 71). A central premise to a multidisciplinary team is the breaking down of information siloing among departments. This process exists when various departments attempt to handle scenarios within their areas and neglect to work collaboratively with others (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). This is particularly concerning when warning behaviors are not passed forward and looked at in a larger context (Meloy, Hoffmann, Guidimann, & James, 2011) across campus- or school-related settings.

Determination about the size of a team has both pros and cons. Having a small team of three to four people may lack the

substance it needs to accurately assess violence and risk. Having a larger team of ten to twelve may render members to share less information out of fear “it will get out and around campus.” Finding the ideal team membership size that respects privacy, but performs functionally can be a challenge. Nationally, we see average team sizes at 9.6 (Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; and Schiemann, 2018).

The Campus Safety and Security Project (2009) reports that the most common members on a team come from academic affairs, campus safety, counseling, campus police, health services, and human resources. Additional team members may include a case manager (either clinical or non-clinical), someone from disability services provider (or Individualized Education Plan/special education teacher in K–12), Greek life representative, Title IX staff member, and a residential life representative. When looking at team membership, it is critical to consider the context of your specific institution. BITs should continually review current research and national trends to develop best practices for their own campuses. One challenge of BITs is ensuring that they have representation from all relevant campus departments without growing so large that scheduling a meeting, making decisions, and keeping track of follow-up activities become a challenge. Teams should have various levels of member involvement, database access, and expectations through the assignment of staged membership levels. One example is NaBITA's use of core, inner, middle, and outer circle member designation (Van Brunt, Reese, & Lewis, 2015).

The National Threat Assessment Center (2018), offers a concluding thought: “The multidisciplinary nature of the team ensures that varying points of view will be represented and that access to information and resources will be broad” (p. 3). The key here is having enough members of the team to give that varied perspective, but not too many that conversation and efficiency will be sacrificed. The importance of an appropriately sized team is reminiscent of a statement made by Pollard, who stated that, “information is a source of learning. But unless it is organized, processed, and available to the right people in a format for decision-making, it is a burden, not a benefit” (1996, p. 123). While Pollard's time was long before BITs were in existence, his sentiment is a reminder of the nature of information and how it is to be processed.

Standard 6. Meeting Frequency: Many teams have regularly scheduled meetings at least twice a month, with the capacity to hold emergency meetings immediately when needed (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ & FBI, 2017; Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Van Brunt, 2014b; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; and Schiemann, 2018).

Teams should meet and train regularly (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ & FBI, 2017; Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Van Brunt, 2012a; and Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008). Team leadership should have the ability to organize and launch meetings through conference phone lines and video technology immediately if needed, as referrals are received. For ongoing meetings, teams should meet once a week or twice a month and have a set meeting time (e.g., Tuesdays at 3 p.m.).

Around two-thirds of teams nationally meet either weekly or twice a week (Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016). These meetings are typically 60–90 minutes in length. When there are no cases to discuss, that time can be used for professional development, to conduct tabletop exercises, and to review procedures and processes (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ/FBI, 2017; Van Brunt, Reese, & Lewis, 2015; and Van Brunt, 2012a). The chair or other assigned member should circulate an agenda prior to each team meeting.

Standard 7. Team Mission: Teams should have a clear mission statement, which identifies the scope of the team; balances the needs of the individual and the community; defines threat assessment, as well as early intervention efforts; and is connected to the academic mission (Van Brunt, Reese, & Lewis, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; HEMHA, 2013; Van Brunt, 2012a; and Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012).

A mission statement communicates a commitment to early and intentional action with a goal of ensuring safety and wellbeing for all members of the community. To this end, mission statements should reflect a focus on identifying patterns of behavior, responding to faculty and staff concerns, and threat assessment, prevention, and mitigation (Van Brunt, Reese, & Lewis, 2015). These statements should drive the BIT's actions and serve as a "home base" for those times where the team begins to drift off course. A mission statement communicates, to the greater college community (or K–12 district) and beyond, a commitment to intentional action for the safety of all in the community. To this end, exemplary teams' missions have evolved to reflect a focus on pattern analysis, faculty and staff concerns, and threat assessment.

The Jed Foundation and Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA, 2013) 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 statements, they suggest addressing the process of gathering

information; assessing the information in a systemic way; defining a response plan that addresses the needs of the individual as well as that community; implementing responses to de-escalate concerns; and monitoring case disposition to assess for further follow-up. To this end, an example mission statement would be: The Behavioral Intervention Team is a campuswide team of appointed staff and faculty members responsible for identifying, assessing, and responding to concerns and/or disruptive behaviors by students, faculty/staff, and community members who struggle academically, emotionally, or psychologically, or who present a risk to the health or safety of the college (or K–12 school or district) or its members.

Standard 8. Team Scope: Teams vary in terms of what type of concerning behavior they address. Some teams address concerning behavior among students only, others expand their reach to also address concerning behavior from faculty, staff, and/or affiliated members (parents, alumni, visitors, etc.). The team's work should happen in conjunction with appropriate law enforcement and human resource agencies when needed (Van Brunt, 2012a; Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; and Van Brunt, 2016b).

Forty-five percent of teams across the country address faculty and staff concerns as part of the BIT process (Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016). The scope of the BIT reaches beyond actively enrolled students and the physical geography of the campus. The BIT should define how and if the school will address concerns within the broader school community. Examples of this broader scope include: full- and part-time students, online students, previously enrolled students, prospective students, faculty/staff, and other community members, such as partners of students, parents, returning alumni, and those who frequent school services and locations like the health center, the library, camps, or sporting venues. It is recommended that if teams choose to address concerns beyond those of enrolled students, they should work with law enforcement and human resources as appropriate.

Campus attacks are not limited to students, but expand beyond and include those who have connections to the campus community (Van Brunt, 2012a). Hunt, Hughey, and Burke (2012) highlight the concerns facing faculty and staff. "Downsizing, dismissals, drug abuse, pay reductions, extended working hours, automation, interpersonal conflict, budgetary reductions, family problems, a sense of vulnerability pertaining to job security, low job satisfaction, cultural conflicts, and domestic violence have all been linked to violence in the workplace and at institutions of higher education" (p. 45). A faculty member's tenure denial is another event that has the potential to raise concerns, especially

in the terminal year, when the faculty member walks among those who denied the tenure (Gorski, 2010; and Wang, 2016).

While there are obviously less leverage and requirements that can be placed on non-enrolled students, the BIT should work collaboratively with law enforcement and other community resources to address potential threats. “Campus Behavioral Intervention Teams should not only concern themselves with students, but rather with every member of their campus communities. While just managing current students on the BIT would offer a sense of clarity and focus for the team, today’s reality demands that teams stay vigilant and gather information about other potential disruptions and threats to the campus community” (Van Brunt, 2016b, p.103).

Standard 9. Policy and Procedure Manual: Teams have a policy and procedure manual that is updated each year to reflect changes in policy and procedures the team puts into place (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; Van Brunt, 2012a; Van Brunt, 2014a; and Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012).

BITs should have a policy and procedure manual that is updated each year to reflect changes in team processes. This manual should be a set of guidelines that provide direction for teams in an organized, consistent, and thorough manner. “Teams should establish protocols and procedures that are followed for each assessment, including who will interview the student of concern; who will talk to classmates, teachers, or parents; and who will be responsible for documenting the team’s efforts. Established protocols allow for a smoother assessment process, as team members will be aware of their own roles and responsibilities, as well as those of their colleagues” (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018, p. 3).

At a minimum, this document should include the mission statement, statement of scope, and a defined approach to educating the community concerning risk factors. It should also outline the philosophy for record-keeping; how the team is marketed and advertised; its Web presence; meeting frequency; a template for meetings; how intra- and inter-team communication takes place; documentation standards under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); an explanation of the risk rubric and a discussion of corresponding interventions at each level; a discussion of silo reduction; memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with local agencies (as needed); an explanation of the differences between psychological, threat, and violence cases; how the BIT approaches training (e.g., on a monthly basis, in-service, or outsourced); and any standard operating practices for online, referral, or tracking systems (Van Brunt, 2014a).

Policy and procedure manuals and/or guidelines should not be a collection of materials given out to the community or a re-hashing of marketing, website language, or mission statements. Rather, the manual should be a set of instructions that would be sufficient to guide a new team to re-create the processes, follow up on the cases currently being managed, and deploy future interventions with consistency. NaBITA developed a template that outlines these core elements (Van Brunt, 2018).

The ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies for Student Affairs Practitioners (2010) share individual competency areas that guide student affairs practice. These include describing campus protocols for responding to incidents, explaining how campus crisis intervention systems interact, assessing the effectiveness of the programs, and coordinating with appropriate individuals tasked with crisis management and intervention strategies.

Standard 10. Team Budget: Teams have an established budget to meet their ongoing needs and the communities they serve (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; Van Brunt, 2012a; Van Brunt, 2014a; and Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012).

BITs are funded through a variety of mechanisms across institutions. Teams should have an annual budget allocation, though team funding may be shared across departments. Strategic planning and care should be considered when developing a budget to meet the goals and needs of your team and community. Various offices may fund important and foundational items, such as reporting and tracking systems, yet these funds should be transferred or allocated directly into the BIT’s budget. Budgets should include a variety of expenses, such as printing costs for brochures, marketing posters, trainings and conferences for team members, and organizational memberships (Van Brunt, 2018; and Van Brunt, 2014a).

“Perhaps more important is that institutional leaders who control the resources provide the financial support necessary to help the team do its job ... These priorities should include support for team members to attend national conferences and trainings to stay current with the latest trends in threat assessment and behavioral intervention; to purchase or maintain a sophisticated database for record-keeping; to provide materials to the campus community so that they remember what and how to report; and on campuses with a larger caseload, the staff to properly manage those cases” (Greenstein & Calhoun, 2017, p. 53).

Process Elements

Standard 11. Objective Risk Rubric: Teams have an evidence-based, objective risk rubric that is used for each case that comes

its attention (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ/FBI, 2017; Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Van Brunt, 2012a; and Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008).

Teams should use the rubric on every case, not just those thought to be more straight forward or less concerning. A risk rubric should be broadly defined to include mental health and disruptive behaviors, as well as threats, ideations, or behaviors that put others at risk. An example of an objective risk assessment rubric is the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool (Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, Swinton, & Van Brunt, 2014). Ongoing team member training on these tools should be conducted to ensure consistency and calibration of team member ratings and comfort with the selected tools (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ/FBI, 2017; HEMHA, 2013, Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; and Van Brunt, 2012a). BITs should assign a rubric-specific level of risk to each person discussed by the team at each meeting.

Standard 12. Interventions: A team clearly defines its actions and interventions for each risk level associated with the objective risk rubric it has in place (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ/FBI, 2017; Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; HEMHA, 2013; Van Brunt, 2012a; and Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008).

Articulating the range of actions and interventions associated with each risk level will establish the level of authority and empowerment the team possesses. Interventions should increase as risk level increases, since the level of support and intervention needed for a "mild" case is different than that for a "severe" case. HEMHA (2013) describes it this way: "Once the team has received and assessed information, it can consider whether or not further action or monitoring is needed — and what form it should take" (p. 17).

The range of BIT interventions should include follow-up and information-gathering, case management, referral to support resources, parental notification, law enforcement intervention, psychological assessment, threat/violence risk assessment, and interim suspension. By using a risk rubric like those discussed in Standard 11, the interventions can then be applied consistently and appropriately, given the level of risk. "Once a level of risk or threat is determined using a tool, the BIT then deploys the intervention techniques and strategies appropriate to that level of risk" (Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014, p. 55). While information-gathering initially occurs in the first stage of a BIT process, collecting data should be an ongoing process that allows for tailoring of intervention efforts to ensure their efficacy and effectiveness. "Once the team has received and

assessed information, it can consider whether or not further action or monitoring is needed — and what form it should take" (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018, p. 23).

Standard 13. Case Management: Teams invest in case management as a process, and often, a full-time staff position, to provide flexible, need-based support to help students overcome challenges (Schiemann, 2018; Dugo, Falter, & Molnar, 2017; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; Jarvis & Scherer, 2015; Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden, 2014; Wilson, Powell, Woodley, Nelson-Moss, Blamey, & Thibodeau, 2013; Van Brunt, 2012b; HEMHA, 2012; and Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011). Some schools have developed entire departments dedicated to case management for students.

According to the 2012 joint white paper by NaBITA and the American College Counseling Association (ACCA), "case management, at its very core, is about helping students to overcome the obstacles they encounter in their lives. This is central to the educational mission of most institutions of higher education, which seek to retain students and provide them with an environment conducive to academic success. Case management can serve as a keystone mechanism through which universities support and keep students safe" (Van Brunt, 2012b, p. 5). Case management, whether as a larger philosophy for team interventions or more specifically defined as a position on the team, is about helping students overcome obstacles they encounter during their academic pursuits. "All case managers seek to improve communication among those involved in the case and identify and create solutions to overcome potential obstacles or problems with the student following through with the existing plan of action" (Van Brunt, 2012a, p. 67).

Case managers seek to assist students from a solution-focused approach, noting what is and can be done, rather than what was and what was done or what has held students back. Case managers may conduct intakes and risk assessments; assist students in accessing services; develop plans for academic success; and foster resiliency, grit, and self-reliance. "Case managers may be incorporated within the team, [or] affiliated with the campus counseling services, the Dean of Students Office, or a community resource" (HEMHA, 2013, p. 17). Case managers on a BIT may be clinical or non-clinical in their work and record-keeping, and will seek to help students reach their goals and avoid becoming lost amongst departmental silos.

One example of creative and case-management-focused intervention involved a team's care manager developing a book club for at-risk students to improve social skills and increase access between students and resources (Tervilliger, 2016).

Standard 14. Advertising and Marketing: Teams market their services, as well as educate and train their communities about what and how to report to the BIT, through marketing campaigns, websites, logos, and educational sessions (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; Halligan-Avery & Katz, 2017; Parfitt, 2016; Jarvis & Scherer, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; and Van Brunt, 2012a).

Teams should educate and train their communities about what and how to report to the BIT. This can be achieved through the development of marketing campaigns, a website, logo, brochures, and educational sessions taught by team members. Numerous teams have examples of these marketing ideas (Halligan-Avery & Katz, 2017; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2016; Terwilliger, 2016; Scott, 2014; and Dooly & Poindexter, 2013). Obtaining buy-in from institutional leaders is key, as they “can play a major role in helping to encourage faculty and staff to report concerning behaviors by how they talk about the team. They should have the trust in the BAT to know that the team is making the best decisions to help keep the community safe and share that with whoever will listen” (Greenstein & Calhoun, 2017, p. 53).

BITs should have a marketing plan to reach all members of the community through both active (e.g., lecture-style conversations with department heads and orientation programs) and passive (e.g., website, brochures, signage, and videos) advertising and marketing efforts. Marketing and advertising the BIT is an ongoing process, rather than something that is completed and shelved. In addition to advertising the BIT as a whole, training specific departments on the importance of reporting can increase referrals and strengthen trust in your team (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018), as well as clear up any misconceptions.

Standard 15. Record Keeping: Teams use an electronic data management system to keep records of all referrals and cases (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; Jarvis & Scherer, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; HEMHA, 2013; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; and Deisinger, Randazzo, O’Neill, & Savage, 2008).

The BIT must keep track of reports and cases in a way that is secure and easily searchable. Keeping data for data’s sake is an insufficient goal for a BIT. The record-keeping systems used by the BIT should collect and store reports and case notes in a way that allows team member access, facilitates communication among members of the team, and has the ability to analyze patterns (e.g., escalations, de-escalations, and baseline data) that exist beyond anecdotal knowledge. HEMHA (2013) writes that,

“no matter what aspects or details of a team’s discussions are captured, some basic mechanism needs to be in place to track individual cases and their disposition. Some schools rely on secure databases (either created for this purpose or purchased from a software vendor) to track cases and document discussions and action” (p. 22).

Electronic data management systems should be robust and allow for data to be entered and stored in a way that is easily retrievable, searchable, and secure. Handwritten or paper files should not be used. Reports must also be easily collected from stakeholders, with efforts to remove any obstacles along the way, such as overly complicated reporting forms or vague instructions on how and when to share information with the BIT. There should also be a discussion of record expungement, transcript notation, and applicable standards under FERPA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and state confidentiality law (Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; and Van Brunt & Sokolow, 2018). In addressing concerns involving students with disabilities, it is key to discuss the mandates of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

A team’s documentation should clearly show the process by which it gathers data, rates cases on an objective risk rubric, and assigns individuals on the team to conduct interventions. “Documentation that states the rationale for the team’s decisions at various points in an assessment and management process and summarizes the factual basis for those decisions can serve to memorialize the team’s thought process if its decisions are ever questioned” (Nolan et al., 2011, p. 116).

Standard 16. Team Training: Teams engage in regular, ongoing training on issues related to BIT functions, risk assessment, team processes, relevant laws and policies, and topical knowledge related to common presenting concerns (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ/FBI, 2017; Jarvis & Scherer, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; and Van Brunt, 2012a; 2014a).

The DOJ and FBI (2017) write that, “team members should consider and pursue achievable ways to acquire and maintain knowledge to have a basic level of proficiency. This proficiency should allow team members to appropriately identify, assess, and manage persons of concern. This task is complex, nuanced, and often time-sensitive” (p. 80). To assist with developing this process and improving accountability, teams should create an annual professional development schedule that includes conferences and workshops, online trainings and webinars, and a review of articles and books throughout the course of the year.

These trainings should include issues of risk and threat assessment, mental health, cultural competency, improving inter-team communications, record-keeping, tabletop exercises, team processes, intervention techniques, review of recent legal cases, silo reduction among departments, and how to best nurture the referral sources coming from the community (Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; and Van Brunt, 2012a & 2014a). Specific training on the tools, systems, and team-specific processes for new team members should be conducted by the team chair or experienced team member leadership. Homeland Security and the Secret Service suggest that members “should meet on a regular basis to engage in discussions, role-playing scenarios, and other team-building and learning activities. This will provide members of the team with opportunities to work together and learn their individual responsibilities so that when a crisis does arise, the team will be able to operate more easily as a cohesive unit” (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018, p. 3).

Standard 17. Psychological, Threat, and Violence Risk Assessments: BITs conduct threat and violence risk assessment as part of their overall approach to prevention and intervention (National Threat Assessment Center, 2018; DOJ/FBI, 2017; Jarvis & Scherer, 2015; Van Brunt, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014; and Van Brunt, 2012a).

Threat and violence risk assessments provide useful information that informs the interventions deployed by the team (ASIS International and the Society for Human Resource Management, 2011; ASME-ITI, 2010; Turner & Gelles, 2003; and Meloy, 2000). Psychological assessments are used to better understand the mental illness and corresponding behaviors a student may be exhibiting and provide diagnosis using the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,” and to understand the effects of medication and treatment recommendations. While these assessments are useful, mental health assessments may be necessary but not sufficient to determine the risk of targeted or instrumental violence (Choe, Teplin, & Abram, 2008; Monahan & Steadman, 2001; and Van Brunt, 2015) and, as such, should be part of an overall threat or violence risk assessment process rather than replacing it (Van Brunt & Pescara-Kovach, 2018).

Mental health assessment is a more general approach to examining an individual’s psychological wellbeing, whereas threat or violence risk assessment deal specifically with the level and likelihood of a threat and the potential for violence. By extension, threat assessment is a response to a direct threat (e.g., “I am going to put a bomb in the library,” or “I am going to kill my roommate”). Violence risk assessment is more specific than a mental health

assessment, but broader than a threat assessment. Specifically, a violence risk assessment includes assessing the risk of individuals who may not have made direct, veiled, conditional, and/or indirect threats (Van Brunt, 2015).

BITs should build a violence risk assessment capacity within their teams by training everyone on the team in broad violence risk assessment and then choosing three or four members who can perform a specific threat assessment as the need arises (Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton, 2014). Some examples of these tools include: “The Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35)” (Van Brunt, 2012a; 2015), the “Violence Risk Assessment of the Written Word (VRAW²)” (Van Brunt, 2016a), and the Extremist Risk Intervention Scale (ERIS) (Van Brunt, Murphy, & Zedginidze, 2017).

Quality Assurance and Assessment Elements

Standard 18. Supervision: The BIT Chair regularly meets regularly with members on an individual basis to assess their functional capacity and workload, and to offer guidance and additional resources to improve team membership performance (HEHMA, 2013; Van Brunt, 2012a; and Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016).

The chair of the team should conduct two face-to-face meetings per semester with each team member. The purpose of the meetings is to assess how the individual is functioning on the team and to look for opportunities to share and receive feedback on ways to ensure ongoing effective team membership. The conversation should be reciprocal in nature rather than take a top-down approach. “Too often, supervision is seen as simply holding an employee to a set of standards and objectively reciting areas of compliance and non-compliance on work tasks. Yet, more often than not, successful supervision is... a caring, empathetic listening, an intimacy, a sharing. It is within this environment that lasting change occurs” (Fitch & Van Brunt, p. 53–53).

The chair-team dialogue may include discussions on applying the risk rubric or assessment, addressing potential stress and burnout from difficult or challenging cases, balancing workload with other job duties, and identifying personal goals and objectives moving forward. “It is also important to note that institutional leaders should recognize the importance of the role of the BAT chair and/or the face of the team to the institution ... This further justifies the need for leaders to support the team and ensure that multiple members of the team are trained and well-educated on the issues and best practices for BATs” (Greenstein & Calhoun, 2017, p. 53).

Standard 19. End-of-Semester and Year Reports: Teams collect and share data on referrals and cases to identify trends and patterns and adjust resources and training.

A key element of BIT assessment entails understanding how a team functions, including how it communicates internally and externally, how information flows, how referrals are tracked, and how potential weak spots are identified. There are numerous models of end-of-year assessment (Stufflebeam, 1971, 2000; Shuffebeam, Madaus, & Kelleghan, 2000; Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2010; and Creswell, 2009).

The development and management of campus BITs requires a commitment to assessing the ever-changing nature of risk assessment and team dynamics. End-of-semester and yearly reports become the institutional record of the BIT functionality and provide insight into trends on campus, areas to which prevention programming should be funneled, and the team's risk mitigation efforts. These reports allow teams to identify areas of concern and direct resources and training time to mitigate potential problem areas on the team. Numerous examples of these reports and assessment processes can be found through the *Journal of Behavioral Intervention* (Penington, 2017; Van Brunt, 2014c; Elliot & Reece, 2014; Reese, 2013; and Greenstein, 2013). In addition, these reports "ensure that the appropriate institutional leaders understand the processes for behavioral intervention and that they are informed when the need to be" (Shaw & Westfall, 2015, p. 162).

Reports should include, at minimum, data related to the demographics about referred students, types of referrals, referral sources, risk rating at start and upon closing of each case, interventions used, team trainings, accomplishments, and identified areas for improvement. Teams should establish a strategic plan for assessing the outcomes related to interventions for those referred. This plan could include satisfaction surveys, retention data, pre- and post-surveys, etc.

Data should be reported in both quantitative and qualitative representations (Van Brunt, 2014a). Quantitative (or number-based) data can be very useful to BITs in terms of an overall assessment plan. Concrete data and numbers can tell compelling stories about a BIT's effectiveness and improvement needs. Qualitative research data is richer and deeper than simple numeric results. While it can provide a greater level of detail, it is often seen as "messier" than number-based data. For instance, community members may be more likely to share either success or failure stories related to their reports to the BIT rather than rating their experience on a Likert scale.

Standard 20. Team Audit: The team assesses the BIT structure and processes and ensures it is functioning well and aligning with best practices.

In the 2014 book by Van Brunt, *The Assessment of Behavioral Intervention Teams: CORE-Q¹⁰*, he writes, "The assessment of a BIT provides four major opportunities for the team. First, the assessment process and subsequent results provide the community with evidence about how the team conforms to national standards and best practices, as well as how the team's processes keep the community safe. Second, it's our belief that good assessment and the subsequent sharing of results with decision-makers at your institution create the potential to secure additional funding and leverage greater support for your campus BIT. Third, assessment provides the BIT with the ability to identify areas of weakness on which to focus future improvement efforts. Finally, it is likely that in coming years, we will see a more formal set of expectations for BITs in terms of team demographics and functionality, with increased focus on analytical decision-making and the development of practical action steps to manage at-risk students" (Van Brunt, 2014a, p. 2).

If done well, the work of campus teams can be intense and time-consuming. Attending to group dynamics, offering caring and support for those who participate on the team, and considering rotations of leadership and membership are all part of the team's ongoing activities and considerations (HEMHA, 2013, p. 30).

Every two years, the BIT should conduct an internal or external review of its structure, process and quality assurance, and assessment elements. These elements should include policy and procedure manual, team traits, addressing siloed communication, education and marketing, nurturing referral sources, data collection, record management, team training, risk rubric, and quality assurance. NaBITA created the Core-Q¹⁰ assessment as one method to ensure the team is operating in an effective and efficient manner (Van Brunt, 2014a).

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