



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
CENTRAL TEXAS

Texas A&M University – Central Texas

BIT
Behavioral Intervention Team

Policies and Procedures Manual
2015

Introduction:

On April 16, 2007, the landscape for higher education changed dramatically with the events of the Virginia Tech shooting (Fox & Savage, 2009). As a result of the events at Virginia Tech, universities in the United States began reviewing how they respond to students whose behavior cause a concern for the welfare of the individual and of the campus community. Institutions across the country have since sought to be more proactive in their efforts to provide for a safe environment in which students, faculty, staff, and visitors can fulfill the academic endeavors.

In the fall of 2010, Texas A&M University – Central Texas implemented a behavioral assessment team, known as BAT, to evaluate and respond to situations where a student’s behavior caused concern for the welfare of the student or TAMUCT community. BAT consisted of representatives from across the institution as was chaired by the Director of Student Affairs. This team was tasked with assessing the situations that were reported and recommending any action that should be taken. Despite the lofty goals of the team, its name was somewhat restricting.

In the fall of 2014, the team known as BAT was renamed to BIT (Behavioral Intervention Team) to reflect the idea that this group of professionals also act to intervene in the life of a student to ensure the individual’s and community’s welfare. The change in name allowed for greater effectiveness and understanding of what the team’s goals were. BIT will receive reports of concerning behavior from faculty, staff, students, and campus visitors. These reports may involve classroom, student activity, or personal behavior. BIT has been established by TAMUCT as an additional measure for campus safety. BIT will operate in many instances with very limited information while exercising due diligence to protect the university, community and the individual.

Mission Statement

The Behavioral Intervention Team, or BIT, through a collaborative and proactive approach is committed to identifying, preventing, assessing, intervening, and reducing threats to the safety and well being of the Texas A&M University – Central Texas community.

~~The Behavioral Intervention Team meets regularly to discuss, intervene, and/or provide timely resources and support for students displaying concerning behavior or experiencing problems that might lead to disruptive or dangerous behaviors.~~

Guiding Principles

- Targeted violence can often be prevented
- Violence is a dynamic process
- Targeted violence is a function of several factors
- Corroboration is critical
- Threat assessment is about behavior, not profiles
- Cooperating systems are critical resources
- Does the person pose a threat
- Keep victims in mind
- Early identification and intervention helps everyone
- Multiple reporting mechanisms enhance early identification
- Multi-faceted resources can provide effective interventions
- Safety is a primary focus

Goals

- Support student success
- Provide a safe environment for members of the university community, and
- Provide a comprehensive and collaborative approach in response to student behaviors that are disruptive to themselves or the educational environment

Team Membership Description

The Behavioral Intervention Team consists of university personnel with expertise in student affairs, university operations, human resources, law enforcement/threat assessment, and mental health knowledge. Membership is based on the position and not the individual. The members selected have regular contact with campus community members in some way, which aids in the assessment of students of concern, and/or the authority to receive a BIT recommendation and take the appropriate action. A collaborative process to assess

concerns is used. Depending on the situation, personnel with areas of specialization or responsibility may be called upon to assist the BIT. The Dean of Students, or BIT designee, will keep senior university officials advised of situations and specifically will communicate with the Director for Public Relations and Brand Strategy.

Data Collection, Storage, and Security

Anyone can report behavior they believe to be concerning or threatening by either speaking directly to a BIT member or submitting an on-line referral through the Maxient database. The electronic report can be accessed through the University's website and will display instructions with a series of text boxes for descriptive text. Once the report is submitted, it is directed to the BIT Chairperson and selected members of the team for review. The submitted report becomes a part of the electronic database to be used for assessment of students of concern. Maxient allows for team members to review referrals, dispositions of academic and non-academic misconduct, and identify patterns of behavior. BIT members are informed as they join the team and reminded during regular trainings that many of these records are dynamic in nature. In this understanding, what the team believes to be fact may change as the situation unfolds. Care should be taken not to form judgments or use the information in decision making outside of BIT. Additionally, no information may be distributed or viewed by non-BIT personnel without first consulting the Chairperson or designee.

The ability to make notes in BIT files is limited to the Chairperson or designee.

Outputs

BIT is responsible for:

1. Developing and implementing educational and training opportunities for all members of the University community with regard to behavioral assessment. This will include publications and promotional materials designed to create awareness, understanding, and participation with BIT.
2. Maintaining, with the support of Academic Technology, a current website, which is easily accessible from the university's main page and other department pages.

3. Receiving, coordinating, and assessing referrals from faculty, staff, students, and local authorities to provide a safe campus, both physically and emotionally.
4. Review applications for admission to the University of students who indicate they have a criminal record (non-Gatesville applicants) or currently have charges pending; or students who have a reportable student conduct record at a previous institution. This will be accomplished by a subgroup of the BIT consisting of the dean of student affairs, assistant dean of student affairs and chief conduct officer, director of admissions, and chief of police.
5. Reviewing applications for readmission to the University of students who were suspended for disciplinary reasons or involuntarily withdrawn from the University.
6. Reviewing applications for readmission to the University of students who received a medical withdrawal. This will be accomplished by a subgroup of the BIT consisting of the assistant dean of students, director of the counseling center, and the coordinator for disability support & access. This process is only to provide transitional assistance to the student who voluntarily withdraws. This process should never conflict with ADA regulations and requirements, or state and federal laws.
7. Provide an annual report to the Dean of Student Affairs.

Procedures

Procedures have been established to define the general operations of the Behavior Intervention Team (BIT), what a referral¹² is and how it is made, and the actions and recommendations deemed appropriate.

Team Meetings and Frequency

BIT conducts business by three means: (1) preliminary response meeting, (2) regular team meetings, and (3) critical incident response meeting.

1. Preliminary Response Meeting

Once a report is received, a preliminary response meeting may be conducted by the BIT Chairperson and dean of student affairs and the assistant dean of student affairs. Other BIT members may be consulted and included in the preliminary response meeting. These members will conduct an investigation

¹ All referrals should be considered in reference to the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool (Sokolow, et al, 2011).

² It may be determined by the BIT Chairperson or designee or other team member that the person of concern should be evaluated by the SIVRA-35 assessment tool or by professional mental health personnel. These assessments are only tools to assist the BIT in making informed recommendations to the appropriate authority and are not intended to be the deciding factors.

for the submitted report and convene BIT if needed for an emergency meeting. If an emergency meeting is not needed, the findings of the report will be reported at the regular team meeting.

An investigation may include:

1. Review of Advocate's CARE module;
2. Review of the respective student's disciplinary record;
3. Interviews to determine the existence of corroborating evidence;
4. Other relevant information as deemed appropriate to ensure the safety of the university community.

2. Regular Team Meetings

These meetings occur every two weeks and are designed to review on-going cases, make appropriate recommendations with new cases, and provide regular opportunities for training of BIT members. Training may be scheduled or provided at regular meetings and include tabletop exercises, discussion of current topics in the news, reading assignments, and webinars. Other trainings should include attending conferences and opportunities during the summer.

Case review will include:

1. Briefing on the Preliminary Response Meeting by the BIT Chairperson or designee;
2. Review of documentation, interviews, and other relevant information;
3. General discussion and;
4. Recommendations by the BIT

Team meetings will take place once a month in June and July.

3. Critical Incident Response Meetings

In the event of a student suicide attempt or commits suicide, there is an apparent threat or danger to the campus or community members, or an event has occurred which may require the immediate attention of BIT, a CIR meeting may be called by the Chairperson or designee. This should not be confused with an active crisis. Active crises are managed by the university's Crisis Response Team. Any and all actions or recommendations of a Critical

Incident Response meeting should be reviewed at the next regular team meeting.

BIT Referrals may be submitted by:

1. On-Line Referrals to BIT
 - a. From the University's home page, click on Campus Life, or go to <http://tamuct.edu/bat>
 - b. Click File a Concern
 - c. Complete the form
2. Verbal Referrals to BIT
 - a. Select a BIT member from the names listed on the website, brochure, Say Something folder, or in this document
 - b. Call or speak in person with the BIT member, telling them what you observed or heard from another, explaining why the behavior causes you concern
3. Anonymous Referrals
 - a. By completing an on-line form at <http://tamuct.edu/silentwitness>.

Types of Behaviors that should be referred to BIT:

- Stalking
- Violent fantasies
- Anger problems
- Non-compliance or disciplinary matters
- Academic misconduct
- Interest in previous shooting situations
- Paranoia
- Acting out
- Violence or cruelty
- Bullying
- Changes in physical appearance
- Changes in academic performance
- Changes in patterns of interaction
- Classroom absences
- Repeated requests for special consideration
- Victim/martyr self-idealization
- Irrational conversation or speech that seems disconnected
- Statements related to death or hopelessness
- Threats of harming self or others
- Manipulation or being disruptive to other students, faculty, or staff
- Problems concentrating & remembering things or making decisions
- New or regularly occurring behavior which pushes the limits and may interfere with class
- Recent police contact
- Unusual interest in police, military, terrorist activities and materials

Types of Behaviors that should be referred to the Counseling Center:

- Anxious, depressed or overwhelmed
- Prolonged and significant difficulty with the demands of college
- Test, math, or writing anxiety
- Pattern of relationship problems
- Speaking or writing that seems bizarre
- Loner
- Expressionless face
- Use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Suicidal ideation

Actions and Recommendations

The Behavioral Intervention Team will receive reports of concerning behavior, classroom misconduct, circumstances of violence, threatening behavior, stalking, or harassing behavior. In an effort to protect the university community BIT will, by way of the appropriate university office or official, investigate and respond to reported behavior indicating a student may pose a risk to self or others. BIT may recommend some or all of the following³⁴:

1. Make recommendations to appropriate university personnel that may include, but are not limited to the actions or sanctions consistent with the TAMUCT Student Handbook. In addition, BIT may refer students to professional counseling, make recommendation(s) for the filing of criminal charges, or other actions deemed appropriate;
2. Assign appropriate university personnel to the subject of the incident for follow-up and observation;
3. Recommend that the proper authority notify, within FERPA guidelines, the parents, guardians and/or next-of-kin, and;
4. Make recommendation(s) to appropriate university personnel regarding conditions of consideration for a student to return. This could include requiring internal or external psychological evaluations.

Education and Training

Texas A&M University – Central Texas and institutions across the country are in a balancing act between protecting student rights and the “Duty of Care” that is required by law. Beginning in the 1990s, higher education began to drastically turn

³ Action on any recommendation(s) is the responsibility of the appropriate university personnel. The assigned personnel will report back to BIT. If the recommendation is not followed, an explanation should be provided.

⁴ The BIT Chairperson or designee is responsible for making notations to BIT files concerning recommendations, actions taken, and disposition of each report.

away from *in loco parentis* toward complete student freedom; and now to requiring institutions understand a reasonable *Duty of Care*. Courts have held that all institutions have a reasonable *Duty of Care* in respect to student and campus community safety and well-being. As seen in *Mullins v. Pine Manor*, 499 N.E.2d 331 (Mass. 1983) “The college had a duty to provide security for its students.”

Texas A&M University – Central Texas understands that by creating the Behavioral Intervention Team, we have accepted an accompanying responsibility, or *Duty of Care*, to inform and educate the university community. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the BIT, our community must be aware of the BIT, the need and purpose of intervention, how to file a report, and how to contact members of the team with questions, concerns, or comments.

Annual Review and Report

The Behavioral Intervention Team will provide the Dean of Student Affairs with an annual review and report during the regular cycle of assessment within the Division of Student Affairs. The assessment cycle will run from January 1 – December 31. The report will consist of a campus-wide qualitative survey of BIT to include comments related to program awareness, easy of electronic submission, and on-going education and training opportunities. The team will also participate in a self-study and review. Additionally, the Advocate database CARE/BIT reports will be reviewed with the possibility of some reports being purged.

Conclusion

While supervisors, managers, department directors, department chairpersons, deans, and student affairs staff are appropriate counsel for general student/employee concerns, they are not experts in responding to threatening or alarming situations. Therefore, it is everyone’s responsibility to report situations that could possibly result in harm to the campus community to the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT). If an incident is currently a threat, the observer should report directly to the TAMUCT Department of Public Safety at 254-501-5800.