

BEHAVIORAL

ASSESSMENT AND

INTERVENTION

TEAMS

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**BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND
INTERVENTION TEAMS**

**SETTING UP YOUR
TEAM**

SAMPLE

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

INTRODUCTION

The scope and composition of a threat assessment team can and should vary based on the type of institution and the focus of the team, as Phelan (2012) indicates. This remains true even as you move beyond threat assessment and build your Behavioral Assessment and Intervention Team (BAIT) upon the foundation of student success. We know, from decades of research, that the keys to increasing student retention rest in early intervention, fostering student engagement, academic integration and goal commitment (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1994). So when considering how to set up your BAIT team, remember that there is no magic formula, but there are important pieces that need to be considered.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Whether preparing to form a new team or restructuring your existing one, there are several important elements to consider, including:

- ◆ **Affiliation – Public or Private.** While the parameters discussed in this guide will apply to any campus, there are important procedural considerations that may need to be considered based on the affiliation.
- ◆ **State.** Similarly, laws differ from state to state so it will be important to know what those regulations may be.
- ◆ **Two-year or Four-year.** Community colleges present a variety of challenges, including the “stop-in, stop-out” nature of the institution.
- ◆ **Residential or Commuter.** Obviously, a residential campus will require more resources and support. Similarly, the team will have another level of intervention strategies at their disposal (see the Intervention Strategies section).
- ◆ **Athletics.** It will be important that there is an active and engaged representative from athletics, if applicable.
- ◆ **Graduate Student Liaison.** You will want to ensure that there is a team member who can speak to the needs of this population and respond accordingly.
- ◆ **Underage Programs.** A campus with underage programs, such as childcare, Pre-College summer programs, minors on campus, etc. will require additional programmatic and legal considerations.

The key thing to remember is that since each institution is different, there is no one-size-fits-all structure. The structures shared here provide a good framework, but are not absolute.

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SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

THINGS TO CONSIDER (CONTINUED)

Chairing Your Team

The most important member of the BAIT is the chair. This is the person who will be coordinating response efforts, organizing meetings, ensuring follow-up occurs and often making decisions to involve others in the process. It is important that the chair have a firm grasp on all aspects of the administrative structure of the university, understands policies and procedures and, perhaps most importantly, has administrative authority to take action as needed.

The campus BAIT is one of the most critical groups on campus; it may operate in the background but as noted earlier in this guide, if and when something occurs, the work of this group will face a great deal of scrutiny. For those reasons, and many others, we recommend that the chair of the BAIT be a senior staff member in student affairs. According to the *National Association of Behavioral Intervention Teams* (NABITA, 2012), a survey of over 800 colleges and universities showed that 66% of BAITs are chaired by either the Dean of Students or the Chief Student Affairs Officer.

Most of the examples that we use in this publication show the Chief Student Affairs Officer in the role of Chairperson. Institutions need to make decisions that are in the best interest of their campus, but remember, balancing care, conduct, and compliance requires the skill and authority that a senior student affairs staff member possesses.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES

Model 1: The University of the Arts is a 2,200-student urban campus located in Center City, Philadelphia with residential capacity for 600 students. Students earn bachelors and masters degrees in performing and visual arts (“The University of the Arts,” 2014). This unique population has students housed in three academic colleges.

The Student of Concern Team is chaired by the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs (AVP) and includes Directors from Health and Counseling Services, Student Life and Academic Advising, as well as the Associate Deans for all three colleges and the accessibility advisor (see Figure 2.1). The University of the Arts employs a model that houses student affairs and enrollment under one Vice President; therefore, the role of the AVP and Dean is more appropriate than the CSAO to serve as chair. Notice also that due to the physical composition of the campus and the three separate colleges, the inclusion of key representatives from each of those areas is critical for ensuring student success and intervention.

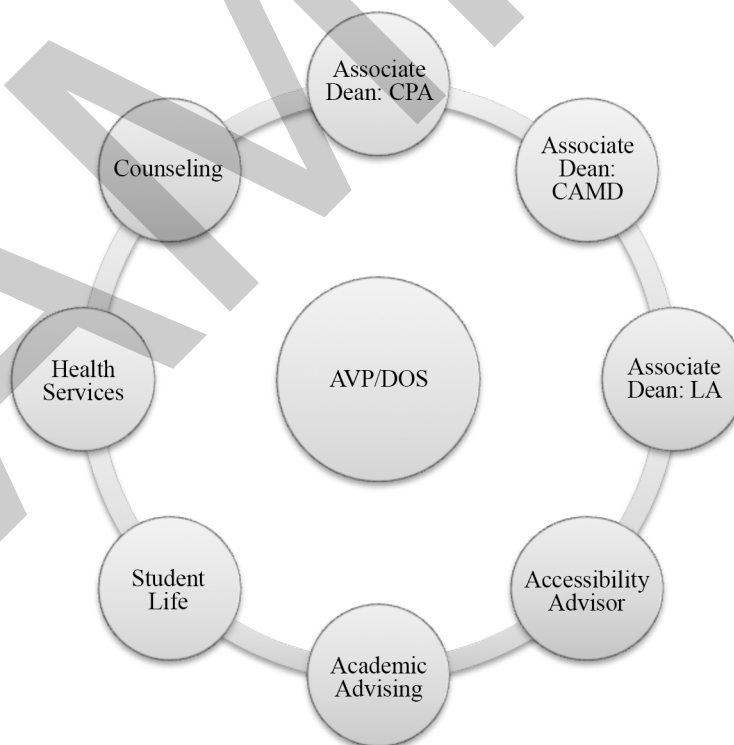


Figure 2.1. University of the Arts Student of Concern Team

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

Health and Counseling: The Silent Contributors

Setting up a BAIT without the presence of health and counseling professionals could be a mistake. Not only do these staff members possess intimate knowledge about community members being discussed, but they also have specialized skills that can help discuss strategies and tendencies, which other professionals may not be able to do. Due to confidentiality and other regulations, these professionals may not be able to offer very much during the actual meetings; that does not mean they are not active participants.

We recommend building strong relationships with your health and counseling leaders and an understanding of what can be shared and what can not. Being silent during a meeting means that they are listening — and opens the door for private conversations afterwards. Additionally, while health and counseling professionals may not be able to share a great amount of details because the student is not currently an imminent threat, they may be able to share enough hypothetical information to allow the BAIT to act.

Remember, it is a misnomer to assume that medical professionals on your campus cannot share anything — they can, but the bar as to when they can is much higher than it is for other administrators. If they are at the meetings and know a community member is being discussed, they will be able to act accordingly, when necessary.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

Model 2: Randolph-Macon College is a 1,500-student residential campus located in Ashland, VA with a large percentage of students who reside in on-campus housing. A Division III athletics institution, Randolph-Macon College can be seen as a “typical” small, liberal arts institution with a fairly equal distribution of males and females and a history dating back to the late 1800’s (“Randolph Macon-College Quick Facts,” 2014).

Their *Behavioral Assessment/Intervention Team* is chaired by the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, with representatives from Residence Life and Conduct, Campus Safety, Health and Counseling, and the Associate Dean for Faculty (see Figure 2.2). Notice again the inclusion of academics into this model.

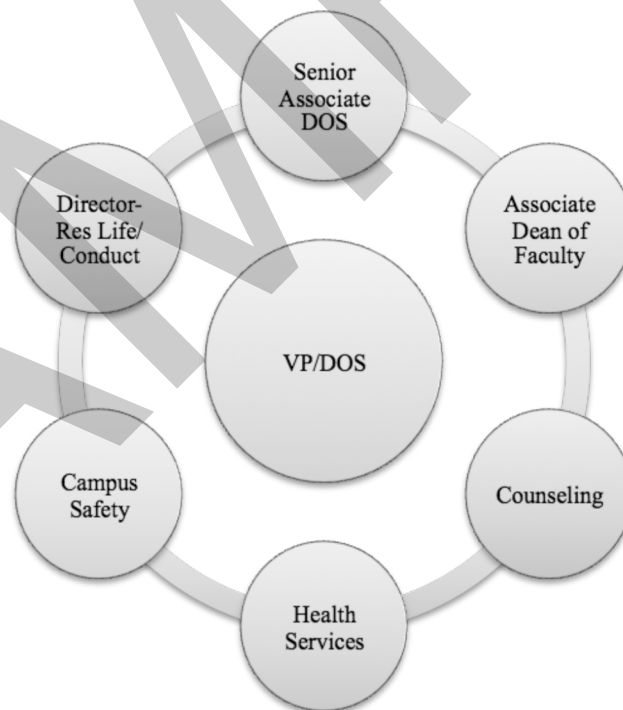


Figure 2.2. Randolph-Macon College's Behavioral Assessment/Intervention Team

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

Model 3: The University of South Carolina is the flagship institution for the state and is home to over 31,000 students. Boasting a strong tradition of Division I Athletics, USC attracts one-third of its enrollment from out-of-state and houses over 6,100 students in on-campus housing with the remaining 25,000 residing elsewhere in the community (“Move In 2013: By the Numbers,” 2013). USC also has a robust Greek system, which creates another element that will need to be considered when setting up a team.

USC’s BIT is chaired by the Executive Director of Student Affairs in charge of Student Conduct. The committee consists of two team members who solely focus on BIT issues: the Coordinator for Conduct and BIT, and the Case Manager for BIT. Also serving on the committee are the Executive Director for Housing, Director and Case Manager for Counseling, Health Center Director and the Campus Director of Law Enforcement. In examining models, note from which office teams are originated. USC’s BIT is coordinated through the Office of Housing and therefore, the focus began with residential students, which is evident in the current set-up, as shown in Figure 2.3 (“Behavioral Intervention Team,” 2014).

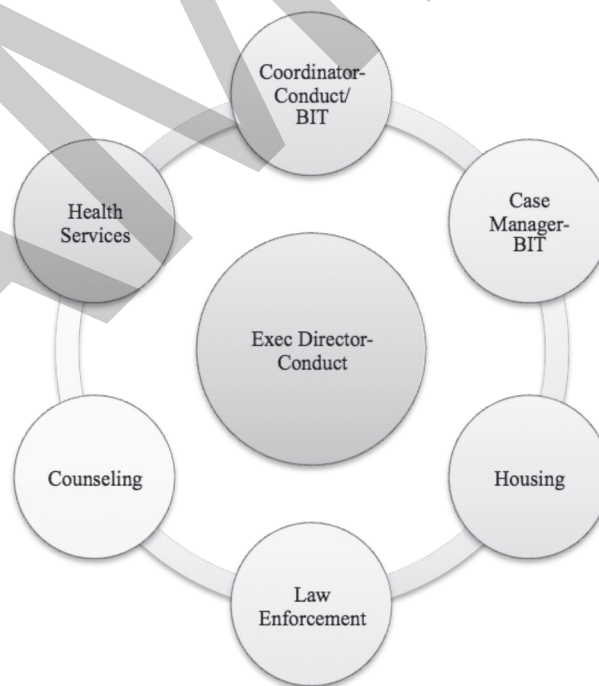


Figure 2.3. University of South Carolina's Behavioral Intervention Team

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

Model 4: University of Mississippi is a public institution with a total student enrollment of just over 21,000 students, the majority (62%) of which reside in-state. Nearly one-quarter (24%) of its population is categorized as minority students (“Ole Miss Facts and Statistics,” 2014). Ole Miss has a well-known NCAA Division I Athletic tradition, especially with regards to its football team.

The University’s *Student Intervention Team (SIT)* “exists to address student behavioral concerns which are not supportive of the faculty’s pursuit of the University’s central function and are not addressed by an existing agency of the University” (“Student Intervention Team,” 2008). The University of Mississippi is very intentional with regards to their team’s set-up and specifically prescribes how the team is comprised, indicating that, “the team shall consist of a representative of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (chair), the University Police Department (UPD), the Provost’s Office, the Registrar’s Office, the University Counseling Center, the University Attorney’s Office, and the Office of the Dean of Students. Other ad hoc members may be added as dictated by individual situations” (“Student Intervention Team,” 2008).

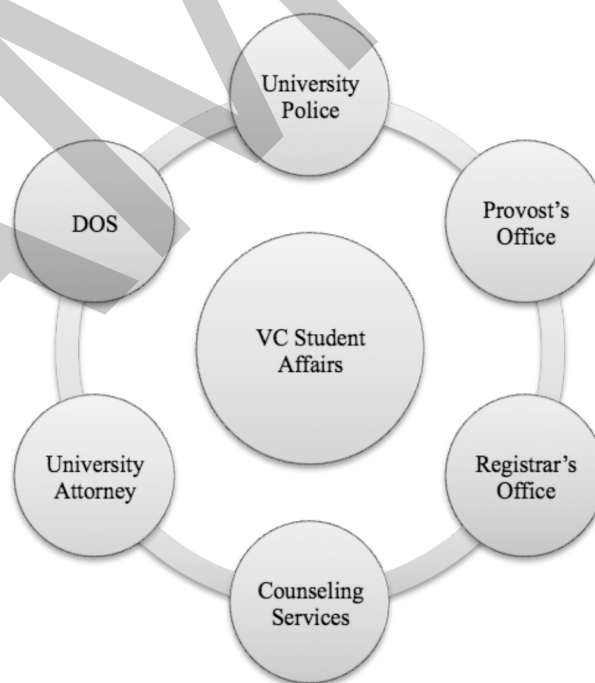


Figure 2.4. The University of Mississippi’s Student Intervention Team

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

The Case Against... Including Legal Counsel

Each institution needs to consider, as the University of Mississippi did, whether or not it is in their best interest to include legal counsel on their BAIT. There can be, however, some challenges with adding this person to your BAIT. To that end, here are some things you will want to consider:

- Are the administrators who are coordinating the BAIT knowledgeable enough about legal practices to act accordingly?
- Is there a difference between the spirit of the law and the letter of the law? If so, operating in the best interest of the student may not always mesh directly with the latter.
- Operating from an “ethically defensible position” is generally going to provide a level of protection with regards to actions.
- Did legal counsel already review and approve policies and procedures as outlined in the student handbook, emergency response plan, etc.? If so, their presence at BAIT meetings may be redundant and counter-productive.
- Does legal counsel provide guidance in terms of conduct and Title IX cases? If so, their presence as a “secondary” member of the team, available for consultations, might best serve the institution’s needs.

Remember, the goal is to act in the best interest of the student and campus community, while being mindful of the law.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

Model 5: Harrisburg Area Community College is the largest, and oldest, of Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges, boasting over 22,000 students on five campuses around the Harrisburg area ("HACC About Us," 2014). It is important to note that approximately 56% of HACC's student population is under the age of 24 with the remaining 44% being 25 or older.

The institution prescribes the standard Behavioral Intervention Team for each campus (as shown in Figure 2.5), consisting of the Student Affairs Dean, who serves as the chair of the committee, the Dean of Academic Affairs, a Security Officer, and Directors of Counseling and Student Life. Additional members may be added as needed and the team meets with the following guidelines serving as their mission ("Behavioral Intervention Team Model," 2013):

1. "Act in a proactive manner to assist students;
2. Maintain confidentiality and handle all matters discreetly;
3. Provide consultation and support to faculty and staff;
4. Connect students with needed resources; and
5. Recommend interventions or sanctions."

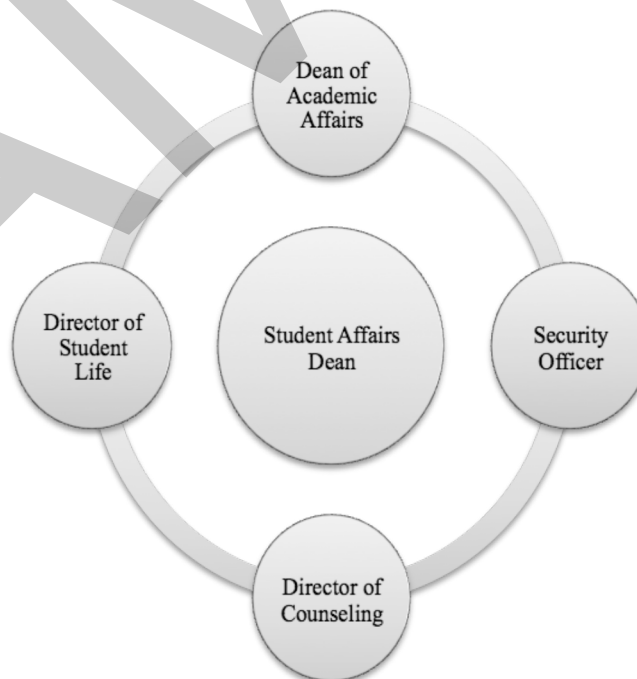


Figure 2.5. HACC's Behavioral Intervention Team

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

Model 6: St. Charles Community College is a public, two-year community college located in Cottleville, MO, serving students who are seeking associate degrees and certificates. The institution has over 11,000 students with a fairly even distribution of male and female students and nearly half attending part-time. Traditional age students comprise the majority of the community at 62%. Additionally, the institution has four intercollegiate athletic teams (“SCC At a Glance”, 2013).

The institution’s *Behavioral Intervention Team* is focused on the health and wellness of students with an emphasis on “upholding college policies and procedures regarding student behavior” (“Behavioral Intervention Team,” 2013). Similar to all of the other models that have been shared thus far in this guide, the team (Figure 2.6) is chaired by the Interim Dean of Students and representatives from the faculty (psychology), campus police, student activities, counseling, enrollment, academic affairs and international student programs. Also of note, the committee has an administrative assistant serving as a primary member. While deciding if an administrative assistant should serve on the committee or not is a choice each committee will need to make, the need to document and follow-up is not.

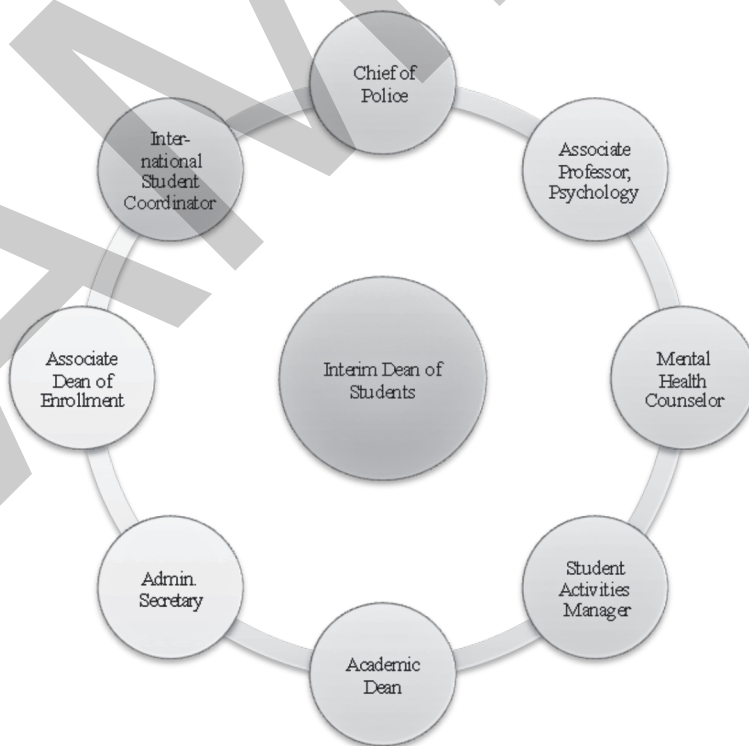


Figure 2.6. St. Charles Community College Behavioral Intervention Team

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

EXAMINING VARIOUS STRUCTURES (CONTINUED)

A Focus On... International Students

While international students add to the diversity and culture of a college environment, they also pose a variety of challenges in terms of managing their success and in assessing and intervening when necessary. Examples include:

- Cultural differences
- Language barriers
- Aversion to counseling and support
- Having adequate health insurance
- Family support within close proximity

BAITs would be wise to consider how the international student population affects their current campus and what steps need to be taken in order to ensure successful interventions when needed. This is not to say that an international services director or coordinator needs to serve as a primary member of the committee; that may or may not be effective, depending on the size of the committee. However, someone on the committee should be able to speak to issues surrounding international community members. Additionally, the BAIT chair should strongly consider having international programs serving as a regular secondary member of the team. There's more to come on secondary members in this section.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT ^{AND} INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

IDEAL SIZE FOR THE BAIT

What is the ideal size for an institution's BAIT? As with most things in higher education and organizational management, the answer here is "it depends." In studying organizational behavior and change, Burke et. al. (2011) noted that the ideal size for any committee to truly be effective is 7 +/- 2. A group larger than 9 will be too challenging to manage; a group smaller than 5 will not have the key people necessary to be effective.

While deciding who the right people are for your institution's BAIT is critical based on the factors discussed above, you will want to ensure the proper number of people are there as well in order to ensure the effectiveness of the committee. Remember, these are the people who actively serve as primary members of the team. There are a number of people who may be ideal candidates to serve as "secondary" members; those people who can assist on the periphery, in a crisis or as needed.

CONSIDERING SECONDARY MEMBERS

The structures discussed previously focus on the primary members of the BAIT. In actuality, a strong BAIT will also have other corollary or secondary members who can and should serve on the team. Secondary members are those who do not regularly attend the meetings, although they could on an "as needed basis," but rather serve as Case Managers on the periphery who can assist with a troublesome issue that is beyond the scope or expertise of the primary members.

Much like a good Emergency Response Team is built upon the *National Incident Management System's* (NIMS) *Incident Command System* (ICS) model, where chain of command is passed when someone with greater knowledge and experience is available to take over (see The Role of the BAIT section), the same can be said of the BAIT. The chair is the Incident Commander, who should consult with, and utilize, secondary team members as needed. Examples of these secondary members and their purpose include, but are not limited to:

1. **Director of Human Resources** – In most cases, the Director of HR will have some role in Title IX complaints, either as a coordinator or deputy coordinator. Additionally, in cases where the community member is a faculty or staff member, having HR involved from the beginning will be important.
2. **Disability Services Advisors** – As community issues become more complicated and the ADA continues to evolve, it is reasonable to assume that some of the behavioral concerns will deal with community members who are receiving accommodations.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT ^{AND} INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

CONSIDERING SECONDARY MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

- 3. Greek Life Advisors** – Greek life can bring a multitude of benefits to campus in terms of engagement and retention but, if not managed properly, it can also create challenges associated with liability. The Greek Life Advisor will have a connection to the students and to the individual organization advisors.
- 4. International Programs** – As noted previously, the role that international programs takes on managing community concerns depends greatly on the amount of international students who attend campus.
- 5. Peer Advisors** – Peer advisors such as orientation leaders, tutors, etc. can be a great asset for assessing situations and providing information that can ultimately lead to effective intervention strategies.
- 6. Resident Assistants** – If students live on-campus, RAs can be an invaluable tool for assessing, intervening and managing a situation.
- 7. Sworn Law Enforcement** – Sooner or later, the BAIT will need to involve sworn law enforcement in a case. If there is a need for law enforcement back-up or support, the team **will want to bring a key member of this department into the group to bring them up to speed on the situation.**
- 8. Title IX Deputies** – If the BAIT should be made aware of a situation that would likely require a Title IX official response, this person would immediately receive a hand-off of the case with the BAIT taking a back-seat role.

As noted throughout this guide, setting up effective BAITs is very individualized to your campus. It will be important to note where the more complex issues may arise in order to build an effective team.

MEETINGS

One of the questions people ask is: How often should the Behavioral Assessment and Intervention Team meet? One of the goals for the team is student success and, as a great deal of research has shown over the years, early intervention is a key to success. To that end, it is recommended that your BAIT follow best practices for meetings and host them at the same time and place on a regular basis, as opposed to on an ad-hoc basis. We recommend that these meetings occur weekly, as situations can manifest themselves and/or develop quickly. Having regularly scheduled weekly meetings is the best way to ensure that a community member's situation is not being missed and is addressed quickly. It also may be necessary for the team to get together for the purpose of addressing a specific and/or direct threat.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

A well-structured team with regular meetings will not be of much use to the community if there is no buy-in from the institution. Besides the legal and ethical requirements of having one, as discussed in the introduction of this resource, BAITs can aid in the retention and success of students by ensuring that they are ultimately able to complete their degree. While the next section will discuss intervention strategies in greater detail, explaining team actions in terms of student success and retention will ensure greater buy-in from the community. Commitment from key areas such as academics and athletics is critical to the success of the team. Here are several tips for working to integrate the BAIT into the lexicon of the institutional culture:

1. Reference the work in retention reports and presentations.
2. Work with Human Resources to have the role of primary members placed into their job descriptions.
3. Attend academic council, or the equivalent at your institution, to address questions or concerns from faculty.
4. Develop an easy-to-remember URL for reporting concerns, such as www.university.edu/concern.
5. Develop procedures that allow faculty to see the benefits of the team's action to their work in the classroom. (This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section)

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT ^{AND} INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH (CONTINUED)

Making Information Available to the Public

One of the common questions institutions ask is what information is appropriate to make available to the general public on the web or in other places. Your institution's BAIT should not be a secret, but, much like the institution's Emergency Response Plan, it is not wise to put every detail about the team, its procedures, meetings, etc. out there for all to see. Community members do not want to feel like there is a team of people looking at everything they do. Results from the *National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (2012)* survey indicated that the most common items contained on BAIT websites are:

- Contact Information (phone and/or email)
- Mission Statement
- List of Behaviors to Report
- Team Membership
- Access to the Reporting Form

Only a small minority of teams include more sensitive information such as team policies and/or risk assessment rubrics. We do not recommend that this kind of sensitive information be shared with the community.

It is recommended that the team have a public website so that community members know about the team, how to report an incident and where to go for support. However, BAITs would be wise to limit information regarding strategies, meetings and other more sensitive topics. The goal is for the team to operate in the background and to implement strategies that will ensure student success. Providing regular training opportunities for faculty and staff is the best way to ensure that community members know about the team and its purpose. NABITA (2012) indicates that the majority of colleges and universities (76%) rely on the training of faculty and staff in order to advertise the actions of the team. An important part to clearly articulate is how members of the community can report "persons of concern" to the team.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

SETTING UP YOUR TEAM

FINAL THOUGHTS

There are many considerations that go into setting up a BAIT on your campus. The key is to keep the team manageable and to not be committed to community members' titles. It is the area in which they work that is most relevant to the team's efforts. Sometimes, a coordinator or assistant director of an area may be more effective, or have a better grasp on what is happening in the community, than the director.

Additionally, like any organization, a BAIT should grow and evolve. Remember, the focus must be on student success. To that end, regularly evaluating the team's membership to adjust for changes to the campus culture and/or changes in personnel is critical. The next section will discuss intervention strategies that work.