



InterACTT
— INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE —
FOR CARE AND THREAT TEAMS

D · PREP

BIT/CARE Team Development



BIT/CARE Team Development

Naming the Team

Having a good name for your team helps make your marketing and advertising pitches more effective to your overall population. The team's name is for the population you are serving, not for the team itself. In many settings, there is a debate about picking a name that spells something clever or leans into law enforcement terminology. At the heart of any team name discussion has to be the central focus of "does the name we picked make it more likely or less likely for students, faculty, staff and/or employees to share information with the team?"

There is quite a debate in the field around the name of a given team in relationship to its function. Threat Assessment Teams (TAT) are said to focus primarily on identifying threats to campus safety. Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT) focus on identifying behaviors of concern and providing intervention strategies and action plans to address the behavior. Other names reflect attempts to improve communication between departments such as Campus Partners, Networks, Risk Assessment, Student of Concern, and Care and Concern teams. K-12 commonly uses tiered model names for their teams or the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) model.

Some consider CARE to be a more inclusive and easier to market name for colleges and universities. While CARE does not need to stand for anything specific, many have come up with their own meaning for the CARE acronym. These include C) coordination, concern or campus, A) assessment or assistance R) response or referral, and E) education or evaluation. In the end, the word CARE itself really does most of the lifting. "What is the CARE team? Well, we care about you and the community and want to help."

Part of this CARE movement has been the use of mascots in front of CARE. Panthers CARE, Sycamore CARES, Tigers CARE, Lions CARE (oh my). This is a creative way to pull in other imagery and branding that already speaks to the community to help elevate the CARE team to receive concerns from the community. There are some mascots (sorry Spartans, Vikings and Raiders) that obviously won't work. Other times, the mascot may be aggressive, like a shark, but then the shark is known around campus as Finn. This has potential to be effective.



When choosing a name, avoid an overly technical, scary or law enforcement focused name that has the potential to deter community members from sharing concerns. Likewise, avoid silly or overly therapeutic names (e.g., Helping Hands or HUGS for Help Understanding Guidance and Support). Choose name that falls somewhere in the middle of these, that does not shut down reporting or scare students but also doesn't come off as overly therapeutic or specialized in the help they offer.

BIT/CARE Team Development

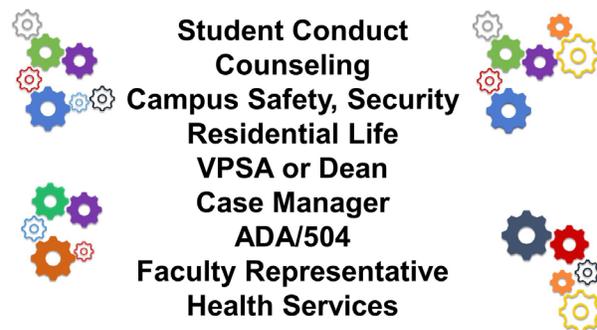
Team Membership

The myth of Scylla and Charybdis from Greek mythology provides an interesting example of how to strike a balance on the team. Scylla was described as a six-headed sea monster and Charybdis as a devastating whirlpool. According to Homer, Odysseus had to choose between losing men to the hungry mouths of Scylla or the entire ship to the whirlpool of Charybdis. Teams have a similar choice. Have a small team of three to four people and the team lacks the information it needs to accurately assess violence and risk. Have a large team of ten to twelve, and team members are less likely to share important private information out of fear “it will get all around campus.” Finding that ideal team membership size that keeps it small enough for privacy but large enough to perform functionally can be a challenge.

The background experience of the team’s membership has an impact on the team’s function and practice. Some teams become more narrowly defined on law enforcement and police response, others on mental health risk, and others on internal conduct/discipline. Regardless of the background of the team members, collaboration must be nurtured among law enforcement, mental health and conduct/discipline. This creates opportunities for departments to work together and reduce isolated communications.

Given the team’s role of gathering information from the community and analyzing that information to drive the interventions, the more diverse the membership, the more the team will be able to take into account various community member’s perspectives, develop a fuller analysis and offer culturally competent interventions. When considering the diversity of team membership, consider the following areas:

- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Race and ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Political affiliation
- Religious beliefs
- Physical and mental disability
- Generation
- Immigrant/national
- Indigenous people



Another central point on team membership is the importance of having decision makers on the team, those with the power and ability to make immediate changes, activate systems and have access to budget money. Equally important, however, is developing an inclusive team membership that includes people who know the community well. Having power and authority without knowledge or connection to the community creates a team that looks good on the outside but is ineffective in their information gathering and interventions. A team with only members who are very knowledgeable and tied to the community but lack the power to take action is a team that is frequently frustrated. The team chair should ensure the team membership has the right balance of leadership and power along with front-line connections and community buy-in.

BIT/CARE Team Development

Team Leadership

Team leadership has been a topic in several CARE, BIT and threat team surveys and research.¹ The general principles of good team leadership are not that different from those of the team leaders or chairs that oversee various early education, high school, college, university and workplace committees and groups, but with a few important distinctions. Team leaders in the college and university setting are typically in administrative leadership functions such as the dean of students, vice president of student affairs or something similar.

While there may be some local differences and reasons to make exceptions to these guidelines, ideally team leaders should be singular by design and plan to serve longer terms than might be expected on other committees. This may be a shift from most committee meetings where team leadership rotates more frequently, particularly in academic and faculty settings. Those with high degrees of information sharing restrictions and privacy, such as counseling, medical directors and law enforcement, are typically not in leadership positions due to the potential conflict in their roles and the importance of keeping these positions working effectively in their areas of responsibility. If there is a second team chair or leader, the roles between the two should be clearly defined so tasks and responsibilities are not left behind. If having two leaders is non-negotiable at your location, consider having one person more focused on leadership, future direction and working with upper administration and the other more in tune with the day-to-day requirements needed to manage the team.

Good team leaders have the respect of the team and the community they work within. Respect and connection around the community helps reduce concern about the team's scope of practice, provides an easier way to engage the team leader if they are concerned about a practice and keeps the team moving toward longer-range strategic goals. They use a timely, well-defined process and bring with them an air of consistency, clear process and stability. Good leaders project a sense of patience and can engage in collaborative problem solving when overcoming obstacles. They encourage discussion among team members, stress the importance of continuous improvement

and training while ensuring the assessment and intervention measures are created from a culturally competent manner with an eye to mitigating implicit bias. As Dr. Poppy Fitch says, "A good team leader is **inclusive, caring, and connected**. Strong team leaders understand the relationship between themselves, their team members, and the success of the team. They **self-reflect** and encourage others to do so."²

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES



The team leader ensures the team is running a peak performance. This means holding regular meetings, even when people are tired and frustrated. It means keeping the team focused on data-driven, culturally competent questions, assessments and interventions, even when this may take more time and effort. They are problem solvers, community builders, good communicators and above all, they stay centered on the team's mission of helping those in their community stay safe.

1 www.nabita.org/blog/data-matters/

2 <https://cdn.nabita.org/website-media/nabita.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/17113159/Leadership-of-the-BIT-Whitepaper-FINAL.pdf> (p9)

BIT/CARE Team Development

Meeting Frequency

Once a team is created, one of the first questions that arises is how often the team should meet. The easy answer is most teams meet weekly to address concerns. If there is not enough time to cover weekly, the meeting becomes an opportunity to engage in training, tabletop exercises or learning more about how team members approach problems. Teams that meet once a month or as needed are really in a reactive rather than a preventative mode. Teams that meet every two weeks may work, but will require more thoughtful engagement on how best to talk with each other and stay current on potential risk cases.

Teams must find a happy medium in terms of how often they meet. Most mid-to-large schools have teams that meet weekly for 1–2 hours. This provides a frequency of communication and sufficient meeting time to discuss previous cases, action plans, adjustment, and to introduce new cases. Teams that meet once a month or every two weeks may lose the ability to respond quickly to emergency situations and follow up on action items to ensure the team members are completing the tasks that they are assigned. The ability to communicate effectively electronically can make meetings, and the time in between the meetings, much more efficient and communicative.

Team leadership is critical here. In the same way very few of us like homework, there is a tendency to cut meetings short or cancel them if there is nothing pressing. When this happens, it sends a message to the team that the meetings are not particularly important, and this begins to chip away at team members carving out that time each week for the meetings. When meetings are canceled, rushed or begin with “Let’s get this done because I know everyone is busy,” there send an unintended message that encourages moving quickly and avoiding debate, which works against the team process.

If your team is just starting out, meet weekly and set a good habit that will provide the team excellent opportunities to grow, talk and be ready to respond to cases. If you haven’t been meeting regularly or have met monthly or as needed, consider a transition to meeting every two weeks for a semester before adjusting to once a week. It is important to not trade meeting more frequently with canceling meetings. Teams should try to keep meeting cancellations under 10%. If you begin to cancel meetings more regularly, look at training and tabletop exercises to make every meeting valuable.

There can be other pressures and tasks that team members have that make meeting weekly difficult. Most teams are made up of staff and faculty that are doing this work on top of their other main responsibilities. We have found a letter from the college president, local school superintendent or company CEO to all team members’ supervisors and for the HR file can help underline why this staff or faculty member’s participation on the team is so critical. This costs the school or organization nothing and often results in better team member participation.



BIT/CARE Team Development

Marketing

Teams should acknowledge the need to market their services and educate and train their communities around the importance of sharing concerns with the CARE team. This should include how students should share concerns with the team through marketing campaigns, a CARE website, team logo, and a 'road show' to share with the community the work of the team.

A greater awareness of the team give the campus community reassurance that the college/ university is working to assess and mitigate potential threats and support at-risk students. Another advertising goal is to educate the community on what to report to the team and how to make a report. The advertising needs to clearly explain the role of the team and what is done with the reports that are made.

CARE teams are not punitive in their approach, but rather preventative and focused on connecting those at risk to resources and moving them from the pathway of violence to social integration and support.

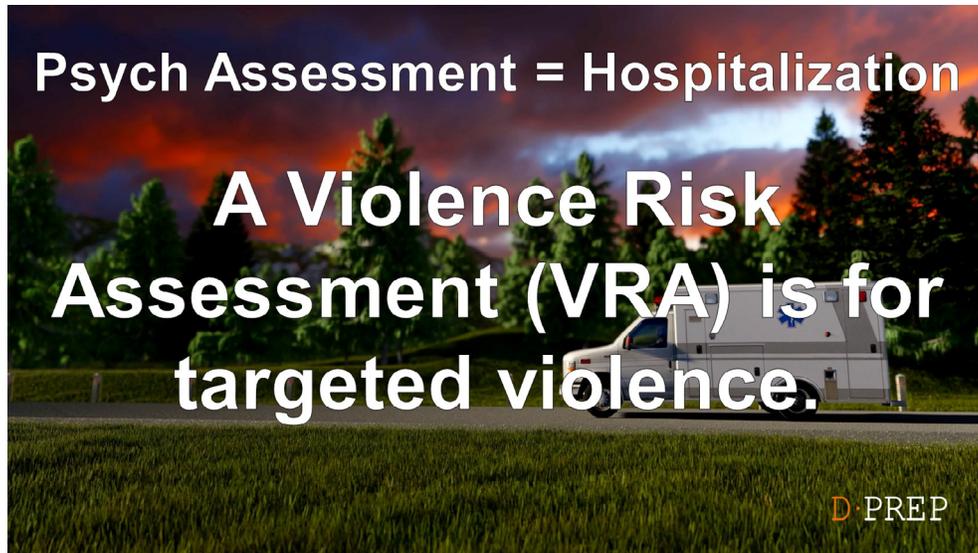


All CARE/BIT work needs to offers something different from a “one and done” approach and needs to include referrals and longer term, collaborative interventions that remain in place until the risk has been reduced.

BIT/CARE Team Development

Assessments

A psychological or mental health assessment determines a diagnosis of a mental illness, an assessment for inpatient hospitalization, the creation of a treatment plan, recommendations for on-going therapy, and specific advice to address symptoms. A violence risk or threat assessment draws from criminology and psychology with a goal of determining the likelihood of targeted or predatory violence occurring.



Referrals



Counseling



Career Services



Health Care



Academic Support



Faculty



Coaching Staff



Parents



Disability Services



Case Management



Residence Life