

TODD: Multiple Teams: How Do We Choose? TRANSCRIPT

Hello and welcome to today's TODD. I wanted to discuss the issue of multiple teams, how do we choose and how to navigate those choices in front of us? This comes up quite frequently for schools, colleges, universities and workplaces where there is a general interest in trying to determine how many teams should we have, oftentimes these teams are developed in parallel with one another. We could have a behavioral intervention team, a care team, even a threat assessment or teams that look at violence risk on campus. The desire here, I would suggest, is to have teams that have a very narrow focus, a clear mission and, you know, collection of staff, faculty, employees, human resources who can address the issues that are in front of us. We also have other teams that exist, these might occur more commonly on college setting or university settings, such as retention teams, where they're charged with looking at issues of holding on to students, keeping them enrolled. They may use programs like starfish or MAPworks to keep track of their database and the information. And these retention teams often overlap with BIT and CARE teams in terms of trying to identify risk factors that may keep students at risk of leaving

campus. And by mitigating these risk factors, we would be in a place to hold them on campus and stay connected to them. We also see, and this occurs in workplaces as well, crisis response teams, critical incident management teams, when some crisis or event occurs, there's a group of people that often get together and brainstorm how to handle this. These can be folks from public relations, from marketing, often from law enforcement, emergency management and oftentimes upper administration coming in with the concern about the company's position, how it's seen in the field and for colleges and universities really addressing some of the public relations issues that might come along with a large crisis.



This could be anything from a manmade crisis, like a shooting or a suicide event all the way over towards tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, chemical spills, the things that might impact the campus and cause a need for a crisis response. We've also seen, and this is, again, primarily at schools, colleges and universities, a focus on bias response teams. It's these bias response teams that are tasked with addressing bias issues that might occur around campus hate speech and language flashpoints that become political hotspots that need to be addressed. And these teams are tasked primarily with identifying where they're occurring and then, putting resources in place to address this. We also find on college campuses and universities the desire to address faculty and staff behavior. We know from national surveys about half the schools across the country, colleges and universities also address faculty and staff behavior. Now, sometimes this is all within one team. Other times they have separate teams, a team focused on faculty and staff issues, and one focused a bit more on college students, graduate or undergrad.

The final issue that comes up frequently we talk about multiple teams is the idea of satellite campuses. And these may be campuses that are geographically diverse. Some schools have campuses spread out over hundreds of miles. Other schools have campuses that are just down the road. The diversity of these campuses becomes an important discussion point related to satellite campuses in that you might have some that have to staff kind of manning the ship, if you will, all by their lonesome. And then you have other satellite campuses that rival, you know, resources and departments that other major colleges may have. So, when you're talking about satellite campuses, the two issues that I find their most salient tend to be how many staff are available at these campuses to respond and to provide support to the students and how distant these campuses are from the main campus.

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The central issue when we're talking about multiple teams harkens back to one of the major lessons from the Virginia Tech massacre, which is the importance of avoiding siloing information. This has occurred with DHS and homeland security related to, you know, the creation of those departments post 9/11 with the terrorism attack there. And what we find is when we have really good people doing really good work, but that work and the process is limited and kept within a silo and not being shared with other departments, we run into problems and the silos of information as a critical piece of what we try to do with collaborative teams, ideally meeting and having these discussions. So, breaking down these silos is something that people hear frequently as one of the talking issues that we get into when you think about the teams and having these multiple teams. There's are a couple, I think, challenges and opportunities related to these. I won't go so far as to suggest you should do one or the either or the other. It really depends on your school, the workplace and your needs. Many times, multiple teams can be politically divided. There is an investment on the school's part to have multiple teams. The challenges, though,



are listed here for you that these teams often are called together to respond to a crisis. What that means is that impacts training as well as the frequency of the team getting to know each other. If you have multiple teams in the same way, if you have multiple devices or cars or, you know, things that you know we own, there can be differences in terms of the upkeep. And the maintenance of the database is another piece that could change depending on the teams. So, we have one team using, say, a really sophisticated database like Maxient. And the other team might just be jotting things down in Excel sheets. And that's where we run into problems with the databases where they're not talking to each other. We

also might have I mean, certainly there's a need for this policy and procedure manuals, directional manuals, operational guides. S.O.P is standard operating procedures for each of the teams. We can't just wing it. That's a huge legal risk when we have multiple teams, but there's not a clear outlined way that these teams should be operating. Similarly, what I've noticed in my work has been a fairly consistent observation that the higher-level threat teams that just come together and respond to an active threat often don't live up to the expectations around clear and consistent documentation of the work they're doing, as well as some of the training. Now, this is not to say the people on those higher order threat teams are not very experienced, very smart, very good at their job. But because much of this can be subjective based on their experience, the documentation lags, the policy and procedure manuals are often non-existent. And on top of all those things, the actual documentation of their processes is not being objectively written.

Another issue we find with multiple teams is the multiple reporting processes that we have a BIT or CARE team at a school. Do faculty and staff and the community members report to them or if there's a threat, does that go up to the threat team? And heaven forbid, there's also a bias response teams that go there and not get connected again, the siloing problem back to the initial BIT or care team. We also need to operationalize the process between how the teams make referrals to each other. So, when I talk about reporting, what I'm talking about here is how the community shares incident report are concerned forward with the team itself. When I talk about referrals, it's how these teams communicate with each other. For example, if a case comes into a BIT team and it's being handled there from this process, when the cases need to escalate up to the threat team, at what threshold do they do that? And almost more importantly, when a threat assessment team is handling a case, what's the process to manage that case, to pass it back down, so to speak, to the BIT and

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CARE team, if a threat comes in that's hate oriented, related to a marginalized population, that kind of bias response team, how does that get reconnected forward to the individuals, say, on the BIT or the care team? So, the more teams you have, oftentimes the more complicated these questions and processes become. Now, I don't want to be one-sided here because I do think there's opportunities when we have multiple teams, what it does is it focuses folks, it pulls them together to clearly define missions. You have some very specific guiding principles which you're focused on. There's often a higher accountability for this response. So, if there is, say, a suicide response team or an eating disorder response team, these individuals are often going to be trained more thoroughly, know the subject matter and a higher level of detail. And they're the ones who ultimately where 'the buck stops here' who are going to be responsible for that process. So, when it moves forward to a singular team, these team members have a wider expectation for their skill set, and that often can be a larger investment in training and opportunities. There also, I think, is some increased privacy and confidentiality, if we had, say, a smaller

faculty and staff team, almost by definition, that keeps the more sensitive faculty and staff issues with, say, your colleagues and people that you work with or spend time with more to a more limited group. And certainly, you can have one BIT or CARE team that would then break off the faculty and staff case came in so you could also create some of that confidentiality and privacy. The ability to conduct, I think, more focused training here, because training is so important, when a team has a more narrowly defined mission, the training can become more specific as well.

Finally, there's this issue of satellite campuses, and this is a tricky one

to be really direct with. You haven't consulted in the space for a while. What ends up happening is it does depend on how many people are on each site, how that site connects forward to the main site. Are there shared databases? Are there connections as we move forward? What kind of cases happen then? You get into the geographical differences. Sometimes the sites are so spread out, there's very strong differences between the services offered at one site that might be more rural, whereas in an urban center they have better access to care. Similarly, the urban sites might have so much that they're struggling with. There might be a difference in the service delivery that they can offer in the speed of moving forward, whereas these satellite sites might do better at providing more timely and effective care for the folks in front of them. So, it really does depend on all of these different factors. So, it's hard to give clear guidance and advice exactly how to do this. But what I've seen work before is that I say larger sites that are satellited out from the main site. We often have smaller teams instead of, say, five to 10 or eight people, we might see, you know, three or four that meet more regularly to discuss things. We might have certain levels of concern with the severity of the case. Getting passed up to the centralized team. I've even watched some school districts and communities have a centralized team for, say, threat assessment at the main campus. And the satellite campuses can then make use of that as the need presents.

As the final TODD take-a-way here, I would say just to sum up for you, if you have multiple teams, make sure you're looking at cross membership. We want to have people sitting on the different teams to reduce that siloing effect and to ensure that we're not missing things. We want to clarify the reporting process and remember, I said reporting is really about sharing information from the community to these teams. Where do we report if we have different ad campaigns, how do they lock into one another? How are we marketing these teams? Do it. There's



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a threat case from a faculty member, for example. Always go to the threat team or sometimes does it go to the bias response team, or sometimes does it go to the care or the BIT? And we want to make sure that we're real clear about not only our expectations, but how we operationalize those moving forward. For any of the teams that we're talking about here, they need to meet frequently and engage in training and those are two issues that I think are a little harder for teams that have very specialized missions. I think most places like workplaces, aren't seeing targeted threats of violence. I'm going to bring my gun in and shoot everybody up, happening frequently in the workplace. So that then translates the team not getting together frequently and having these conversations. So that's one of the things that we really do need to pay attention to. We can't skip out on training or meeting frequently simply because we're struggling with not having enough cases. We mentioned a shared database between the teams that's important that we want to make sure that we can communicate with one another, want to operationalize the referral process between the teams, how are they communicating with each other?

How is that information being shared back and forth? Documentation, documentation, documentation. Got

to write it down. And we need to do this on all the teams. And again, this might be my more subjective opinion, but as I have done this work, what I have seen is teams that do threat response, because of the specialty and the training that they go through, it becomes a bit more subjective and there a little less commonly writing things down in a consistent manner. And that has to be occurring. So, if you have a threat assessment team that's being activated when a threat occurs on your campus and your workplace or in your school, making sure that there's clear and consistent research-based documentation that's occurring to justify the decision-making process. And finally, with the satellite campuses, I think it's so important to consult on these, to have a group of folks that you can talk to see what this looks like in terms of the overall options that are in front of you, that so you can make the best one based on the geographic spacing of the schools, the staffing levels that each campus. And then also just the differences between the services that each campus may need. That's one of the hopes that with InterACTT, there's a way to connect with these different schools all across the country, all across the world that may have innovative practices that you can lean into. We want to thank you for taking some time with us today with this edition TODD: Multiple Teams.

