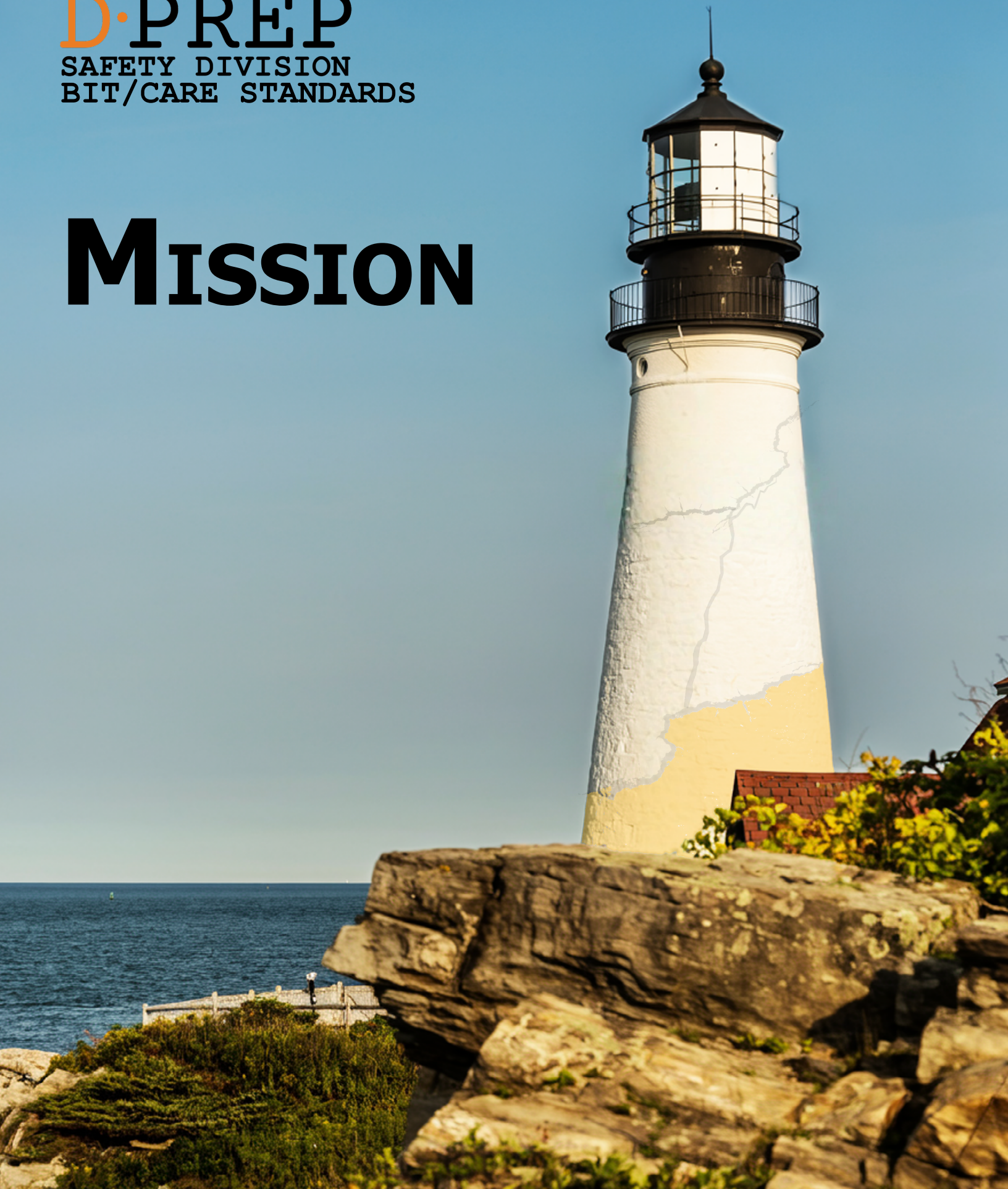


D·PREP
SAFETY DIVISION
BIT/CARE STANDARDS

MISSION





Where Do We Start?

A common question we get from colleges, K-12 schools, and workplaces is where to start the process of building a multidisciplinary collaborative BIT/CARE or threat team. While we provide a set of thirty-five standards and offer rubrics to conduct self-assessments of teams related to these standards through the International Alliance for CARE and Threat Teams (InterACTT), teams often struggle with where to begin.

The mission statement provides a touchstone for the team members as they build and develop the team. It guides the day-to-day work of identifying, assessing, and responding to student concerns. The team's mission provides a brief, straightforward description of the team's purpose and focus on early identification and threat response. The mission statement gives the team an essential refuge point to return to when assessing the direction of their work.

A "BIT" about BTAM

Law enforcement has recently pushed for a newer model called behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM), related to the October 2024 publication of the National Threat Assessment Center (NATC) Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence. They define BTAM as a process that seeks to "proactively prevent incidents of targeted violence." They stress a systemic process, with a focus on rapport building, a low threshold of concern, early intervention, and collaboration from a diverse set of sources.

BTAM is defined by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) as "a systematic process of investigating and assessing concerning behaviors. The primary goal of BTAM is to evaluate the difference between making a threat and posing a threat to a school community, and then to build a management plan that supports the safety of the entire community."

The Department of Homeland Security defines it as "a systematic, fact-based process designed to help safety stakeholders identify threats and prevent acts of targeted violence." They argue for consistency in implementation, along with a focus on identifying, inquiring, assessing, and managing threatening situations and persons of concern."

While the BTAM model stresses early intervention, collaborative interactions, and the avoidance of profiling, this model is not a BIT/CARE model and lacks a focus on the approach behaviors and environmental stressors that occur prior to threat. While a collaborative BTAM model is an important shift for law enforcement, a BTAM model leaves major holes in any violence risk mitigation approach. A complete BIT/CARE model includes behavioral threat assessment but looks at the holistic set of behaviors, academic performance, social interactions, protective factors, and mental illness before, during, and after any threat has been made.

Challenges Faced by BIT/CARE Teams

BIT/CARE teams face several challenges in their work of identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks to campus safety and student well-being.

Receiving Reports: Barriers to Reporting and Awareness

- Underreporting: Faculty, staff, and students may hesitate to share concerning behaviors due to a lack of awareness about BIT processes, fear of retaliation, or uncertainty about what constitutes a “reportable” incident.
- Ambiguity in Referral Criteria: Confusion over when to escalate issues (e.g., distinguishing between typical stress and high-risk behaviors) can lead to missed interventions or unnecessary referrals.
- Limited Outreach: BITs often struggle with marketing their role effectively, especially if they lack dedicated budgets for community education.

Gathering Information: Privacy and Collaboration Hurdles

- FERPA and Confidentiality Constraints: BITs must navigate legal restrictions (e.g., FERPA) when sharing information, particularly from privileged sources like mental health counselors, who may only share hypotheticals without a release of information.
- Data Silos: Information about a student may be dispersed across departments (e.g., academic records, counseling, housing), making holistic assessments difficult without integrated systems.
- Reliance on Incomplete Data: Reports often lack context (e.g., one-off observations vs. behavioral patterns), complicating risk assessments.

Determining Risk Levels: Subjectivity and Resource Gaps

- Subjectivity in Threat Assessments: Risk rubrics often rely on subjective judgments, which can lead to inconsistencies in classifying risks (e.g., mild vs. elevated).
- Bias and Disproportionate Impacts: Marginalized groups (e.g., students of color, those with disabilities) may be over-identified as “risky” due to implicit biases, exacerbating stigma.
- Lack of Training: Teams with insufficient behavioral analysis or cultural competency training may misjudge risks or miss warning signs.

Building Mitigation Plans: Implementation and Follow-Through

- Resource Limitations: Over 75% of BITs lack dedicated budgets, hindering access to tools like electronic recordkeeping (e.g., Maxient) or specialized training.
- Coordination Challenges: BITs often make recommendations but lack authority to enforce actions across departments (e.g., counseling, housing), leading to fragmented follow-up.
- Sustainability of Support: Long-term monitoring (e.g., continuity of care for students’ post-intervention) is often undermined by high caseloads or staff turnover.

Additional Systemic Challenges

- Scope Creep: CARE and BITs may be tasked with addressing low-level conduct issues (e.g., classroom disruptions) that divert resources from high-risk cases.
- Crisis vs. Prevention Balance: Reactive approaches (e.g., threat assessments) may overshadow proactive measures like mental health support or restorative practices.

Standardized training and workshops based on bias, threat assessment processes, intervention strategies, and information sharing compliance (FERPA, HIPAA, state confidentiality law) can help address these, as can improving data access and availability to track reports and student behavior over the long term. Teams must engage in education about what should be reported and how to empower action through bystander intervention training.

The mission statement can also help address some of these challenges. Keep these concepts in mind as guiding principles:



Why Should a BIT/CARE Team Have a Mission Statement?

A well-crafted mission statement ensures the BIT operates effectively, maintains credibility, and fulfills its critical role in campus safety and student well-being. The mission statement serves several purposes:

- 1 **Clarifies the Team's Role**
Helps the campus community understand what the BIT does and when to engage it.
- 2 **Guides Decision-Making**
Provides a framework for assessing risks and determining interventions.
- 3 **Ensures Consistency**
Reduces subjectivity in handling cases by aligning actions with stated goals.
- 4 **Improves Transparency**
Builds trust by openly communicating the BIT's purpose and processes.
- 5 **Enhances Collaboration**
Helps departments (e.g., counseling, security) understand how to work with the BIT.
- 6 **Supports Training & Onboarding**
Gives new team members a clear foundation for their responsibilities.
- 7 **Strengthens Legal & Ethical Compliance**
Reinforces adherence to policies like FERPA, Title IX, and anti-discrimination laws.
- 8 **Facilitates Assessment & Improvement**
Allows the BIT to measure success against its stated mission.
- 9 **Promotes Campus Safety Culture**
Encourages reporting and early intervention by making the BIT's role visible.
- 10 **Justifies Resource Allocation**
Helps secure administrative support and funding by demonstrating the BIT's value.

Four Elements of a CARE/BIT Mission Statement

In a successful CARE/BIT mission statement, there are four areas that should be addressed:

1. **Purpose:** The primary goal (e.g., "ensure safety," "support student success")
2. **Scope:** Whom the team serves (e.g., "campus community," "students in distress")
3. **Approach:** How the team operates (e.g., "proactive intervention," "multidisciplinary collaboration")
4. **Values:** Key principles (e.g., "confidentiality," "equity," "prevention")

A Step-by-Step Guide

A BIT/CARE mission statement is more than just words—it defines your purpose, guides decision-making, and builds trust with your campus community. Whether you’re creating a new mission statement or refining an existing one, this guide will help you develop a clear, inclusive, and actionable statement that aligns with your team’s goals.

Foundations of Strong BIT/CARE Mission Statement:

- Be Specific: Avoid vague language; define who you serve and how you operate.
- Reflect Institutional Values: Align with campus policies on safety, equity, and student success.
- Prioritize Cultural Competency: Explicitly address inclusivity and bias mitigation.
- Set Realistic Boundaries: Clarify what your BIT does (and doesn’t) handle.
- Engage Stakeholders: Incorporate input from students, faculty, and staff.

Research & Foundation of BIT/CARE Mission Statement

- Policy Review: Review existing campus policies (Clery Act, Title IX, student conduct).
- Benchmark: Consider mission statements from peer institutions.
- Identify Key Stakeholders: Such as students, faculty, counseling, and campus police.

Draft & Refine Mission Statement

- Use a structured framework: Consider something like [BIT Name] [action verb] [purpose] through [approach] for [stakeholders].
- Avoid scope creep: For example, don’t promise mental health treatment if you only refer out.
- Ensure legal compliance with FERPA, HIPAA, and other requirements.

Finalize & Launch

- Vote on the final draft with BIT members.
- Share publicly via website, email, and training materials.
- Integrate into BIT workflows (e.g., reference in case reviews).
- Consider including quotes or testimonials from members of your campus community.

Your mission statement is a living document, and the BIT’s mission statement should evolve with your campus. Revisit the statement every 2-3 years to ensure it remains relevant and always tie decisions back to its core principles.

Where Do Mission Statements Go Wrong?

When building a mission statement for a BIT/CARE team, or any organization, avoiding these five critical errors will ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with your team's purpose:

Vagueness & Lack of Specificity

Avoid using generic language that fails to distinguish the team's role. Specifically identify those we serve and clarify how the team operates.

Ignoring Cultural Competency & Equity

Use inclusivity in language and ensure marginalized groups can access support.

Misalignment with Institutional Priorities

Create a mission that aligns with campus policies to avoid conflicts with administration, legal, and student advocates through cross-checking with the college's strategic plan, Title IX, Clery ACT, and campus mental health initiatives.

Overpromising or Scope Creep

Avoid promising actions that are beyond the BIT's capacity that lead to unrealistic expectations and straining of resources through setting clear boundaries, "collaborating with," or "connecting to" rather than "providing" services outside the BIT/CARE team's role.

No Stakeholder Buy-In

Don't draft a mission in isolation without input from key groups (faculty, students, counselors), as this leads to mistrust, underreporting, or resistance to BIT/CARE referrals. Include focus groups and listening sessions, surveys, and piloting the mission with a diverse review group prior to finalizing.

Consider testing your mission statement by asking team members to describe the BIT's purpose in their own words. Ask stakeholders if they would refer a student based on this statement? By avoiding these errors, your BIT/CARE mission statement will be actionable, inclusive, and sustainable—a true north star for the team's work.

Examples of Improved Phrasing

Poorly Written Phrases	Improved Language
We promote safety.	We identify and mitigate risks to campus safety through proactive behavioral assessment and resource coordination.
We help students in crisis.	Our BIT promotes campus safety by proactively identifying and addressing concerning student behaviors through trauma-informed, multidisciplinary collaboration, ensuring equitable support for all students.
We assess risky behaviors.	We respond to concerning behaviors with culturally informed, trauma-aware practices.
We enforce conduct rules.	We balance community safety with student well-being through support-focused interventions.
We ensure all students receive mental health care.	We help connect students to appropriate mental health resources.
The BIT decides interventions.	The BIT collaborates with the campus community to support students in distress.
We prevent violence.	Through early intervention and multidisciplinary collaboration, the BIT/CARE team identifies concerns, rates the level of risk, and builds effective risk management plans.
We support students.	We connect students exhibiting distress to campus resources.
We resolve all student crises.	We coordinate with partners to de-escalate and refer students in crisis.

Conclusion

By following this guide, your BIT/CARE team will have a mission that inspires action, fosters trust, and truly serves your community. This engaging, structured approach ensures your BIT's mission statement is clear, compelling, and effective, turning philosophy into practice.

Next Steps for Your BIT

1. Assemble your drafting team and share this guide with them.
2. Schedule stakeholder listening sessions and review the sample statements provided in Appendix A.
3. Use the four-week process to refine your statement outlined in Appendix B.
4. Launch with transparency—share it campus-wide!

Appendix A: Sample Mission Statements

Here are some examples of college Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) mission statements:

Missouri State University

To identify students exhibiting behaviors detrimental to their or other campus community members' success and provide resources improving opportunities to achieve student success.

Berkeley College

To improve campus safety and security by proactively and collaboratively identifying, assessing, and managing student situations that pose, or may reasonably pose, a threat to the safety and well-being of the College community or any of its members. With a multidisciplinary approach, the BIT provides a centralized and coordinated assessment and intervention process to identify and aid students displaying troubling or disruptive behaviors, prior to the onset of crisis, in an effort to promote a safer campus community..

Ramapo College of New Jersey

To coordinate support services in order to assist students who have reportedly displayed troublesome or concerning behaviors on campus.

Ohlone College

The BIT is a cross functional team of professionals whose purpose is to identify, assess and evaluate concerning student behaviors. The BIT designs interventions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the campus community and optimize student success.

Shoreline Community College

To identify, assess, and monitor concerns about students and coordinates response using a comprehensive, equitable, and multidisciplinary approach

Appendix B: What Now? Putting this into Practice

Adopting a structured approach to building a team mission statement ensures broad input, cultural sensitivity, and team alignment. One way to approach this process is a four-week build process based on the following elements. This process balances efficiency with inclusivity, ensuring the mission reflects the BIT's purpose and the community's values. To that end, remember the importance of using inclusive language, collaborating and crediting contributors, and plan to revisit the mission statement every 2-3 years for relevance.

Week 1: Foundation & Research

Goal: Establish shared understanding and gather insights.

Deliverable: A shared document with research notes and a stakeholder map.

1. Team Orientation
 - a. Hold a kickoff meeting to explain the importance and process of the mission statement
 - b. Discuss the BIT's role, scope, and institutional values (e.g., diversity, student success)
2. Review Benchmark Materials
 - a. Analyze mission statements from peer institutions (see Appendix A)
 - b. Study the college's strategic plan, equity statements, and student conduct policies
3. Stakeholder Identification
 - a. List key groups to consult (students, faculty, counselors, campus safety, cultural centers)

Week 2: Inclusive Input Gathering

Goal: Collect diverse perspectives to inform the mission.

Deliverable: Summary report of themes from feedback.

1. Listening Sessions
 - a. Host focus groups with:
 - i. Students (e.g., marginalized communities, student govt.)
 - ii. Staff/Faculty (e.g., Title IX, counseling, disability services)
 - iii. Use prompts: "What should a BIT prioritize?" "How can it uphold equity?"
2. Anonymous Survey
 - a. Distribute a brief questionnaire to campus asking:
 - ii. Top concerns about student behavior
 - iii. Words to include/exclude in the mission (e.g., "safety" vs. "support")
3. Cultural Competency Audit
 - a. Invite diversity officers or DEI committees to review the draft language for bias

Week 3: Drafting & Collaboration

Goal: Synthesize input into mission statement drafts.

Deliverable: 2–3 polished draft statements.

1. Workshop Session
 - a. Use feedback to draft 2–3 mission statement options. Example framework:
 - i. [BIT] [action] [purpose] through [approach] for [stakeholders]”
 - b. Ensure alignment with:
 - i. Cultural competence: Explicitly name equity or inclusion
 - ii. Collaboration: Highlight partnerships (e.g., “multidisciplinary team”)
2. Small-Group Reviews
 - a. Divide the BIT into pairs to refine drafts (e.g., clarity, jargon-free language)
3. Legal/Policy Check
 - a. Consult general counsel to ensure compliance with FERPA, Clery Act, etc.

Week 4: Finalization & Launch

Goal: Ratify and communicate the mission.

Deliverable: Officially adopted mission statement + dissemination plan.

1. Consensus-Building Meeting
 - a. Vote on the final draft using a structured method (e.g., ranked-choice voting)
 - b. Incorporate last edits (e.g., tweak phrasing for brevity)
2. Campus Transparency
 - a. Share the mission statement with stakeholders who contributed, acknowledging their input
3. Publish via:
 - a. CARE/BIT webpage
 - b. Campus-wide email (e.g., “Meet Your BIT/CARE team”)
 - c. Posters in high-traffic areas (libraries, student centers)
4. Training Integration
 - a. Add the mission to the BIT member onboarding and annual training
 - b. Link it to operational protocols (e.g., “Per our mission, we prioritize student voice in risk assessments”)

Appendix C: BIT/CARE Statements and Reports

Name	Timeline	Focus	Example
Mission Statement	Present	Defines the organization's core purpose, "why it exists."	To promote campus safety by identifying and addressing concerning student behaviors through early intervention and support.
Vision Statement	Future	Describes the future impact or ideal state the BIT/CARE strives for.	A campus where every student thrives in a safe, supportive environment free from preventable harm.
Value Statement	Timeless	Outlines the ethical principles and beliefs guiding decisions.	We prioritize empathy, equity, confidentiality, and collaboration in all interventions.
Strategic Plan	3-5 years	A roadmap with goals, actions, and timelines to achieve the mission/vision.	Increase faculty reporting by 20% through training by 2025.
Code of Conduct	Ongoing	Defines behavioral expectations for team members or the community.	Team discussions remain confidential unless safety requires disclosure.
Policy Document	Fixed	Formalizes rules or regulations (often tied to compliance).	Protocol for assessing Level 2 risk behaviors.
Charter or Bylaws	Foundational	Who governs us, and what are our limits?	The BIT reports to the Dean of Students and meets biweekly.
Annual Report	Yearly	Summarizes achievements, challenges, and data over a period.	2023: "5% of referred students connected to support services."