

# Student Mental Health Program

Training and Technical Assistance for California Community Colleges



## A Rose by Any Other Name: Considerations for Naming Your Behavioral Intervention Team



In the wake of the shooting at Virginia Tech, Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine commissioned a review of the incident to determine how future tragedies could be prevented. The report found that although many individuals and departments within the university were aware of the troubling behaviors of shooter Seung Hui Cho, no one knew all the information, and on one “connected the dots” (Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Since that time, many colleges and universities have moved to institute or further develop

behavioral intervention teams on their campuses as a way to centralize information about emotionally distressed or disturbed students.

One of the first decisions a new or expanded group must make is what to call itself. The names of flora may be meaningless for the sweetness of their scent, but the names of campus behavioral intervention teams have real consequences. When making this decision, the group should be cognizant of the ways in which the name reflects the team’s actual role and responsibilities. Teams should also consider the way that names influence public *perceptions* of its roles and responsibilities, and the way this perception may influence the willingness of the campus community to utilize the team in appropriate ways.

A 2010 survey of 175 schools found that Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) was the most commonly used name for campus teams (Gamm et al, 2011). However, a review of the literature on campus behavioral intervention and threat assessment teams found a wide range of names, reflecting the diversity of roles and responsibilities assumed by campus intervention teams.

Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)	Care Team	Students of Concern Committee
Student Crisis Action Team (SCAT)	Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation (CARE)	Student Behavior Consultation Team (SBCT)
Communicating Action Response for Emergency (CARE)	Assessment and Care Team (ACT)	Behavioral Assessment Team (BAT)
Care and Action for Students Team (CAST)	Student Coordination Committee (SCC)	Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment Team (BETA)
Student Protection Response Team (SPRT)	Student Wellness Team	Student Assistance, Facilitation, and Evaluation Team (SAFE)
Action for Students in Suffering Team (ASIST)	Campus Intervention Team (CIT)	Student Concerns Team (SCT)
Ensuring Action for Student in Emergency (EASE)	Student Review Team (SRT)	Action Crisis Team for Students (ACTS)

## Considerations for Naming Your Behavioral Intervention Team

### What is the actual scope, role, and responsibility of your team?

When choosing a name for your team, there are several things that should be considered, including whether the primary function of your team is *assessment and referral*, *crisis management*, *coordination*, or some combination of the three. The name should reflect the actual roles and responsibilities of the team.



Teams may be involved in some or all of the following **assessment and referral** activities:

- Educating students, faculty and staff about how to recognize and respond to the signs of a student in crisis or distress
- Making referrals for students in crisis
- Engaging in prevention and early intervention by connecting distressed students to appropriate campus or community resources
- Detecting and monitoring potentially students that may be a danger to themselves or others

Teams may be involved in some or all of the following **crisis response** activities:

- Managing a crisis situation in which the well-being of a student or other member of the campus community is threatened
- Responding to complaints about a distressed student who is disrupting the learning environment
- Ensuring that students who are in crisis or distressed receive appropriate follow-up services

Teams may be involved in some or all of the following **coordination** activities:

- Coordinating the efforts of other teams
- Ensuring that students with academic difficulties receive appropriate support
- Serving as an informational hub for faculty and staff who express concern about a student

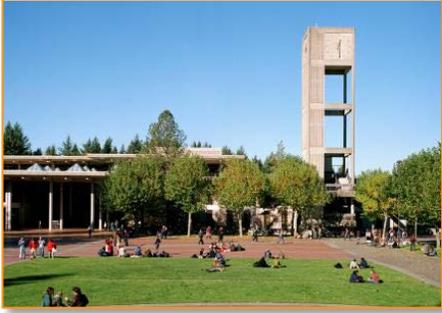
### How will the name of your team influence the way that people in your campus community access it?

Using words like “threat” and “crisis” in the team name connotes urgency. If the primary role of your team is to assess and respond to emergency situations, these may be appropriate parts of your team’s moniker. These words send a message to people on your campus that the team’s principle job is to manage crisis situations.



However, if many of your team’s roles center on referral or coordination activities, the name of the team should reflect these other activities. Several experts advise using caution when choosing to employ the word “threat” in the name of the team, noting that the word “threat” may deter people from reporting students in academic or emotional distress to the team (Keehan, 2009; Jed Foundation, 2010; Sokolow and Lewis, n.d.). People may also hesitate to refer students because of anxieties about potential stigma for the student. Teams that serve a broader function than threat assessment should consider naming their team in a way that encourages the campus community to view the team’s activities as supportive, preventative, or responsive.

## Considerations for Naming Your Behavioral Intervention Team



Some campuses are using variations of “wellness team” to denote a holistic approach to student health and wellbeing. While these teams share many of the functions of traditional behavioral intervention teams, wellness teams may also connect students to fitness and recreation, smoking cessation, weight management, and other wellness supports. The use of “wellness” as part of the team’s name may serve to emphasize the team’s commitment to the general health of the student population.

### How will the name of your team reflect the population it is intended to serve?

Some teams are dedicated to assessing, supporting, or intervening with students, while other teams serve these functions for the campus community at large. When considering the name of your team, you may wish to reflect on the following considerations:

- Will your team work only with students, or will your team also respond to concerns about faculty and staff?
- Will your team also respond to concerns about those outside the campus community who may pose a threat to a student, faculty, or staff member?

Whatever name the team settles on, goal of campus behavioral intervention teams is to prevent student distress where possible, and to intervene early when signs of distress appear. These actions serve to mitigate the harmful effects of student distress, including the prevention of potential crises. The team name supports the team’s core mission by helping to ensure that the role of the team is understood by the campus community, and that each member of the community feels comfortable engaging the team on behalf of the wellness of all.

### References

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