# CORE-Q10 Checklist:
## Assessment of a Behavioral Intervention Team

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## ASSESSMENT OF A BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM

## INTRODUCTION

The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) was founded on the goal of providing teams clear guidance in developing the most efficacious and efficient approach to addressing potential crisis events on campus and on preventing the onset or escalation of violence. With the introduction of the NaBITA Risk Rubric in 2007, certification trainings for Behavioral Intervention Teams that began in 2010, the publication of dozens of table top scenarios, a large scale survey of BITs from across the country in 2012, and the development of the Structured Interview of Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35), NaBITA is now turning its focus to providing the higher education community with clear guidelines and templates to assess the functionality of their teams.

The request for an assessment methodology was a frequent theme during the annual NaBITA conference in November 2012.  Providing a set of standards for teams to compare against and to strive towards has long been a discussion between the authors. Following the results of the 2012 survey and the development of a three-day BIT Best Practices Certification course, NaBITA's next goal became the development of a set of clear assessment standards and an assessment methodology for teams to use in establishing a baseline of their current performance and in identification of future team improvements.

Assessment and program evaluation are well-established constructs and processes in the higher education and business world. It's our goal to bring together the best of these theoretical constructs to guide the processes of these teams and to provide their communities with an accurate, accessible, and useful methods to review campus BIT team creation, demographics, mission, record keeping, and analytic decision making processes.

The assessment of a BIT provides four major opportunities for the team. First, the assessment process and subsequent results provide the community with evidence concerning how the team fits with national standards and best practices, as well as how the team's process keeps the community safe. Second, it's our belief that good assessment and sharing of results with the decision makers at your institution creates an opportunity to secure additional funding to leverage support for your campus BIT. Third, assessment provides the BIT with the ability to identify areas of weakness so that future resources and training opportunities can be focused on improving those areas. Finally, it's likely in coming years we will see a more formal set of expectations for BITs in terms of team demographics and functionality. The functionality expectations may concern formalization of the analytic decision making processes used by BITs and development of practical action steps in the management of at-risk students.  NaBITA remains committed to providing its members and the larger higher education community with quality research and information for the purpose of helping create safer campus environments. While locks, cameras, and safety programs are helpful in providing a safe environment on college campuses, it's the human intelligence information gathering from those in contact with the individual in the midst of an aggression escalation that are the best tools campus community members have at their disposal.  Behavioral Intervention Teams provide a method for collecting and analyzing information, and for identifying and monitoring persons of concern. It's our belief that all institutions of higher education should develop, train, and support (and assess!) Behavioral Intervention Teams on their campuses.

# WHY ASSESS?
## Four Reasons:

### 1. Improve Community Confidence

Our campus communities have charged our students of concern, threat assessment, behavioral intervention, and risk assessment teams to identify and manage at-risk student behavior on our campuses, for the purpose of preventing more extreme violence. By following national best practices in the fields of behavioral intervention and threat assessment, this paper provides a framework of comparison for college or university teams. Additionally, the paper contains key suggestions for teams in development of core competencies in ten areas. By addressing each of these core competencies, BITs gain the ability to share clear demographic and operational data that demonstrates how the BIT functions and seeks to address potential violence on campus.

The communication of a plan to assess and improve a BIT provides the community with reassurance that the individual team is taking its charge seriously. It demonstrates team effectiveness in terms of managing cases and in developing clear and actionable plans to move forward. Assessment (and the dissemination of the assessment results) of the BIT demonstrates a commitment to transparency and to improving team efficacy.

### 2. Secure Increased Funding Allocation

While perhaps a more pragmatic rationale for assessment, the demonstration of effectiveness and identification of areas for improvement are two factors that are required to successfully request increases in funding for a program. A quality assessment provides a BIT with a well-organized collection of data to better form an argument for increases in budget for team leadership, training, staff positions, advertising and marketing expenses, conference attendance, and software platforms. Higher education administrators historically respond well to funding requests where the requesting department has accurate data that demonstrates the effectiveness of its operations in line with national trends. A successful budget request demonstrates current efficacy along with the identification of areas of improvements within the department. While not the only goal of BIT assessment, the ability to more effectively request increases in funding is aided by a quality assessment.

### 3. Locate Areas for Improvement

The most pressing argument for BIT assessment is the ability to identify areas of weakness and to develop a clear action plan for moving forward to address potential gaps. While not intended as a harsh analysis of a team's failings, developing an assessment is critical because it helps a team better understand areas of potential shortage or blind spots. NaBITA is often called in to ascertain how well the team functioned in a situation where violence already occurred. This "Monday morning quarterbacking" is useful in identifying areas of improvement for the team to help prevent future lapses or risk.

Vastly more proactive and important though, is identifying gaps in a BIT's operation prior to the occurrence of violence on campus. This white paper is an investment in assisting teams to develop a better preventative focus on their operations to get out ahead of possible gaps in team function. Data related to national BIT formation and operations needs to be in the hands of individual teams in order to assist them in evaluating against national norms and in the location of areas for improvement.

### 4. Anticipate Future Assessment Requirements

While creating and training leaders in the field of risk and threat assessment in higher education, NaBITA also keeps an eye focused on the horizon to determine what might be happening three, five, or even ten years in the future. One reason the authors believe in the importance of BIT assessment is the very real likelihood of regulation by various legislators in the future. Following almost every campus attack, we see state and local legislators faced with the question of developing laws and policies to prevent future violence.

One of the places to which we hope these legislators will turn is NaBITA as a nationally recognized leader in developing training and policy to keep schools safe. By developing this set of standards and recommendations for an assessment process, we hope to get out ahead of the curve and take a leadership position within higher education. It is our belief that higher education professionals are better equipped than legislators to analyze and to create standards for behavioral intervention, risk, and threat assessment.

# Ten Core Qualities of a BIT

The following are the ten core qualities that are essential to the assessment of behavioral intervention teams. These concepts are pulled from existing surveys (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, & Schuster, 2012; Gamm, Mardis, & Sullivan, 2011; Campus Safety and Security Project, 2009) and research related to BITs (HEMHA, 2012; Van Brunt, 2012; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Sokolow, Lewis, Manzon, Schuster, Byrnes, & Van Brunt, 2011; Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008), as well as the practical expertise of the authors based on their experience serving on their home campus teams or consulting with hundreds of BITs across the country.

The ten qualities are briefly explored in this whitepaper. In terms of using these ten core qualities in an assessment of BIT, teams are encourage to explore these concepts further in the book CORE-Q10 Checklist: Assessment of a Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) available from www.nabita.org.
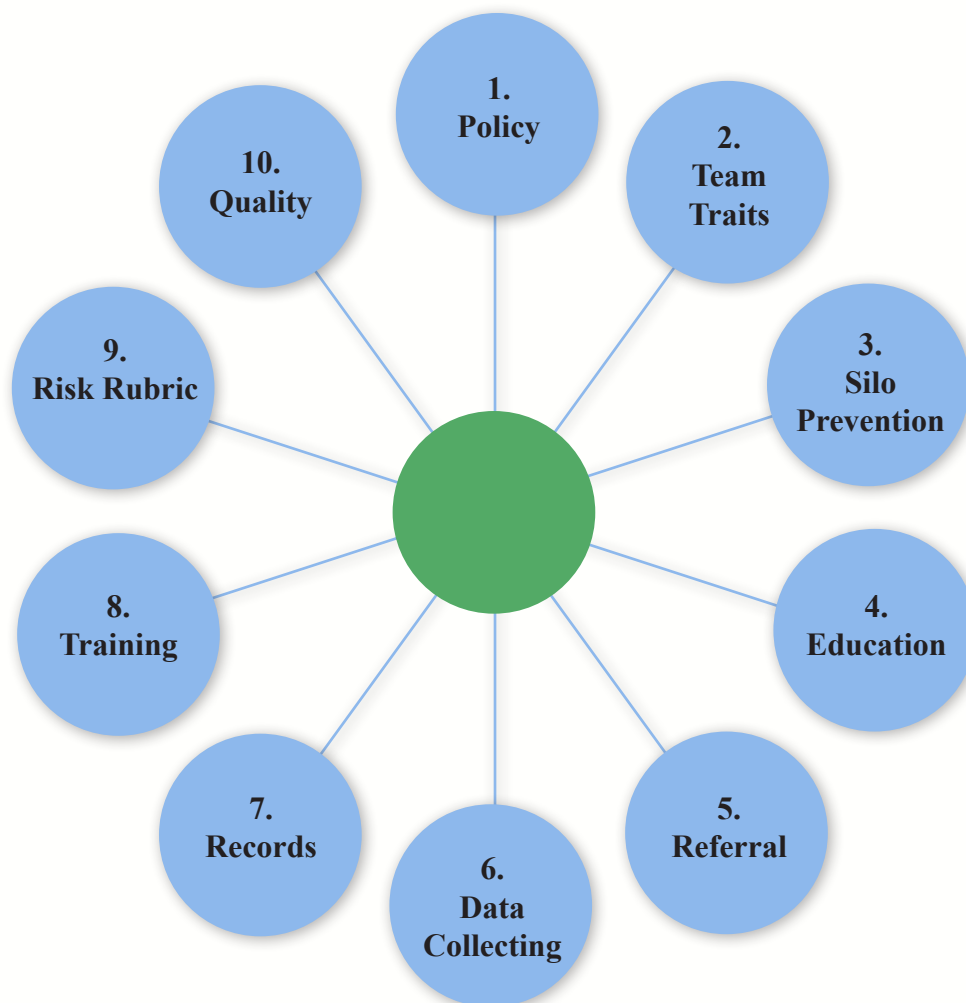
## Core 1:  POLICY

- *Description:* Developing a clear sense of policy and procedures for a BIT is an essential task for any institute of higher education. A clear sense of direction and order of operations separates teams that are simply reactive to crisis events on campus from those who are thoughtful and strategic in their approach to proactively identifying risk and in following this risk through analysis, intervention, and follow-up. A quality policy allows for a team to create a starting place for a structured and well-thought out approach to prevention, intervention, and management while providing opportunities for analysis, critique, and improvement to a team's effectiveness and efficiency.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Mission/purpose statement (statement of scope, identify community, phases of operations), and manual.

## Core 2:  TEAM TRAITS

- *Description:* There are several core traits that are important to the team. These include leadership, team size, meeting frequency, and team membership. Teams should be strategic and intentional in making decisions about these traits, as opposed to allowing circumstances or outside constituencies to dictate these items.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Team size, leadership, meeting frequency, and team membership.

## Core 3:  SILO COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED

- *Description:* One of the key lessons following the 2007 Virginia Tech tragedy was the importance of avoiding siloed communication. This business and marketing concept, known as the "the silo effect" traditionally refers to a lack of coordination and integration between departments; thus, inadvertently failing to support each other. In higher education, we understand the silo effect as the isolation among departments that prevents cooperation and sharing of key information useful to address potential threats.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Silo communication (plan, discussion of counseling limitations, forms and releases, FERPA/HIPAA and confidentiality laws, threat assessment sharing, obstacle identification).

## Core 4: EDUCATION AND MARKETING

- *Description:* A team can be set up and put together like a well-designed sports car, but it won't be going anywhere without some gas in the tank. The gas here is the information we get from across campus. The gas stations are education and marketing to the community about what kind of behaviors should trigger a phone call, email, or direct report to a BIT member. To assume the community already has an understanding of what to report is a dangerous proposition. Many communities are confused and scared when it comes to violence on campus, and, despite efforts to educate the faculty, staff, and student leaders around what behaviors should cause concern, the message needs to be continuous and well-targeted (marketed) to the stakeholders.

- **Areas of Assessment:** List of behaviors, website, and marketing.

## Core 5: NURTURING THE REFERRAL SOURCE

- *Description:* The referral source is the most essential element of a team. It's the person calling 911 to summon the police. It's people calling for an ambulance and fire truck when they see a fire. In the previous section, we discussed the importance of teaching the community what to report to the campus BIT. This section is dedicated to the concept of building this relationship between the BIT and community to improve communication.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Identifying the stakeholders, training, and communicating back.

## Core 6: DATA COLLECTION

- *Description:* Once information is reported to the BIT, the team must keep track of the data in a way that is secure and easily searchable. Data for data's sake is an insufficient goal for a BIT. Data must be collected and stored in a fashion that provides access to team members and which provides the ability to analyze potential patterns that exist beyond the individual team member's memory. Simply stated, a quality data management system allows for data to be entered and stored in a way that is easily retrievable. Data must also be collected easily from stakeholders, with efforts to remove any obstacles along the way.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Anonymous reporting, multiple reporting avenues, and security.

# Ten Core Qualities of a BIT [cont.]

## Core 7:  RECORD MANAGEMENT

- *Description:* Once the data is collected, the team must have some mechanism in place to store and retrieve the data. The storage of the data must be secure. The data itself must be accessible to the team so the data can be used to better direct decision making. Imagine the dashboard of a car. If the data presented here (gas levels, engine temperature, speed, oil pressure) was not easily accessible, it would not provide the driver with the information she or he needs to operate the car efficiently. The record management systems used by a BIT must address four key issues. These are access, pattern analysis, security, and accuracy.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Access, pattern analysis, security, and accuracy.

## Core 8: TEAM TRAINING

- *Description:* A BIT team requires training in a number of critical areas if it's going to remain effective in its work.  Training should address issues such as record keeping; working within FERPA, HIPAA, and state confidentiality standards; threat assessment; mental health disorders; conduct issues; and emergency response.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Tabletop exercises, conferences, and consulting.

## Core 9:  RISK RUBRIC

- *Description:* Central to the analysis of data coming into the BIT is utilization of risk rubrics to assist the team members in determining categories and levels of concern. These categories can be as simple as "low, moderate, and high" or as complex as a team cares to make them. The core purpose of the risk rubric is to identify the level of risk or threat the individual of concern poses, and then to develop an action plan to address the individual's behavior toward the goal of mitigating or lowering the associated risk.

- **Areas of Assessment:** Presence of rubric, action items, consistent, objective, designed for higher education, psychological assessment trigger, threat assessment trigger, addresses both mental health and violence, accessible to all team members.

## Core 10: QUALITY ASSURANCE

- *Description:* There must be circularity to the assessment of the BIT. This involves seeing assessment as an ongoing process that does not have a fixed end-point. Assessing quality requires a commitment to the ever-changing nature of risk assessment and team dynamics. Team members rotate off the BIT or move on to new positions. New practices are developed to improve BIT efficacy and efficiency. Additional software and assessment tools become available. All require a quality assurance plan that is structured, scheduled, and has the appropriate time and energy dedicated to it.

  **Areas of Assessment:** Address team functionality (internal and external, process, hotspots), end of semester reports, and case outcomes.

# CONCLUSION

The task force that assembled this whitepaper is dedicated to developing models of behavioral intervention and threat assessment based on adaptation of academic research, clinical studies, law enforcement reports, governmental investigations, and campus best practices. It is the authors' goal to stimulate current interest in and concern on campuses regarding risk and threat assessment and to offer practical models for assessing behavioral intervention teams. Ultimately, the assessment model offered in this paper may enhance the ability of a college or university to better review how their BIT functions and to better foster thoughtful and timely response and avert tragedy. If you find this paper to be of use, please share it with your colleagues. Copies may be downloaded at www.nabita.org.

# NaBITA -- A Membership Association for Higher Education

While visiting the NaBITA website, the authors encourage you to explore its resources and to consider becoming NaBITA members. NaBITA is a membership association, a clearinghouse for resources, and a mechanism for sharing and disseminating best practices for an emerging field. You will find that NaBITA membership is distinguished by a strong value-inclusive philosophy. NaBITA membership offers a community, a newsletter, and a listserv. NaBITA's members receive added value through discounted and free webinars and seminars, free or discounted registration to the NaBITA Annual Conference, access to a Q&A panel of behavioral intervention experts, and behavioral intervention documentation, including a member library of more than 150 practical documents and resources on successful models, sample policies, protocols, training tools, and tabletop exercises. www.nabita.org

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