

Behavior Intervention Team

Saint Martin's University

I. Introduction

The growing national trends in mental health and community safety issues on college campuses have compelled many institutions to designate a dedicated group of faculty and staff to assess and intervene in problematic student behaviors. The lessons of Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Northern Illinois University, together with the recent shooting at Seattle Pacific University and Umpqua Community College have revealed the importance of monitoring early on disturbing student behavior so appropriate responses can be taken to help meet the needs of students. Saint Martin's University recognizes the need to establish a group committed to the safety, health, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff, what is called the Saint Martin's University Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT).

An interdisciplinary alliance of university departments and campus representatives, the BIT investigates reports of troubling student behaviors with coordinated and caring response for the student's well-being and the well-being of the campus community. BIT team members are trained in sophisticated behavioral intervention and threat assessment standards to distinguish between students in need of support and those who require immediate intervention. Ideally, the BIT is there to respond to the earliest signs of potential crisis rather than waiting for clear signs of impending threat and reacting. The goals of the BIT are threefold:

- To educate the university on identifying concerning student behaviors and/or incidents and where to report them.
- To receive, review, and respond, if appropriate, to reports of concerning student behaviors that help to develop a "whole picture" of the student.
- To centralize collection and assessment of concerning student behaviors. "Connect the dots" of disparate problematic actions involving one student that may be known to various faculty, staff and administrators.
- To empower a culture of reporting among faculty and staff so caring and intentional interventions can be orchestrated.

The BIT balances the needs of the individual student with the greater needs of the community by providing a structured method to address behaviors while eliminating fragmented attention. One incident may not warrant review or intervention; but when placed in the context of other incidents the risk may become more serious, requiring deliberation and action. The idea of the BIT is to develop the "movie" version of student behavior beyond the individual "snapshot" interventions of staff and faculty. The BIT recognizes the importance of interdepartmental communication and decision-making in helping to identify and respond to referrals.

II. The BIT Team

Maintained by the Office of the Dean of Students, the records and information aid the BIT in fully investigating, reviewing, and determining a course of action to properly resolve referrals. The BIT takes reasonable steps to maintain the confidentiality of those who make referrals, but complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The members of the team are as follows:

- Dean of Students – Chair
- Director of Public Safety
- Director of Counseling
- Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Housing & Residence Life
- Faculty Representative (2)

III. The Role of BIT

The BIT maintains the wellness of students and safety of the community by preventing students with troubling behaviors to fall through the cracks of the institution. As a single entity, the BIT provides a campus-wide reporting mechanism through which student behaviors can be identified and reported early. Utilizing the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) Threat Assessment Tool, the BIT determines the appropriate course of action to assure that all necessary follow up and documentation is conducted. Action plans utilize and make available a full range of support services including mental health, crisis management, and victim services. Some referrals may require immediate review and response, in which case the BIT will respond as soon as reasonably possible. The BIT considers a wide spectrum of student behaviors. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Self-injurious behavior/suicidal thoughts or attempt
- A student's behavior indicates acute personal distress (includes written work or communications as well as online activities)
- Aggressive actions or significant disruption to the community
- A pattern of erratic, disruptive, disturbing, frightening or bizarre behavior (includes written work or communications as well as online activities)
- Alcohol, drug violations or other incidents necessitate a hospital transport

IV. Making Referrals to the BIT

The Office of the Dean of Students serves as the clearinghouse through which any member of the campus community can report distressing student behaviors. Student information is FERPA protected and disclosed only in the event of an emergency or health/safety risk and/or an educational need to know basis within the institution. Faculty and staff are encouraged to continue to make referrals to the SMU Counseling Center. However, due to

state privacy and confidentiality laws, the Counseling Center cannot disclose follow-up information or verify that the student has been seen. More acutely distressing student behavior should be referred both to the Counseling Center and to the BIT. It is better to err on the side of caution when not sure about making a referral. Online referrals may be made at www.stmartin.edu/bitForm. The following protocol offers the process by which referrals are made:

- The Dean of Students or designee will review the referral immediately to determine the appropriate response, including but not limited to convening the Behavior Intervention Team.
- In the event that immediate action or intervention is required—immediate risk to oneself or others—BIT collaborates with campus offices and/or community resources to work with the student.
- Document the referral and actions to develop a “whole” picture of the student in the event that the behaviors or incidents accelerate.

Contact the Dean of Students to consult on a situation or concern. If after hours, emergency contact numbers are available through the Office of Public Safety. On-call professional staff for the residence hall can be contacted through the Office of Public Safety 24/7. In the event of an immediate risk to self or others, call 911.

More information and links to faculty and staff resources will be made available as developed by the Behavior Intervention Team.