

It's likely you've been part of that conversation before about the circles. You know the one. It's the conversation that helps us better understand about BIT membership. The inner circle are core team members that meet weekly to discuss cases, train and set interventions into motion. The outer circle are those team members who are invited "as needed" and do not come to every BIT meeting. Hang in there for a minute and I'll talk about the middle circle.

One of the challenges in tackling the issue of team membership is trying to create a standard without the negative side effects. The truth is, there is no perfect size BIT. Our national survey data and research narrows down the ideal team size somewhere in the range of 5-8 members. If your team is fewer than five, you end up missing key people who should be at the table, and will also struggle maintaining operations and institutional memory when team members travel to conferences, have other job duties or leave the college. If your team is larger than eight people, you end up risking some team members being less comfortable sharing sensitive information and may have a hard time keeping the conversation on track and the meetings focused.

So, as a quick preview of the upcoming NaBITA 2014 survey results (available in November), I spent some time looking at the raw data around team membership. While you will have to wait until our analysis is complete for a more detailed look at the data, I thought it would be helpful to offer you a sneak peak at what we've seen so far in terms of team membership responses in summary form.

When it comes to the inner circle, or the essential team members, the following are most commonly part of teams:

- Counseling
- Police/Campus Safety
- Dean of Students
- Student Conduct
- Housing and Residential life (if residential campus)

The next group has been traditionally labeled the outer circle. This is a bit of misnomer: many of these individuals are critical to the college or university BIT and often meet as part of the weekly team meeting. For the sake of argument, let's call these team members the middle circle.

- Academic Affairs
- Health Services
- Vice President of Student Affairs
- Faculty Representative
- Human Resources

The outer circle is best described as individuals who are either only invited to the team as needed or are included in the weekly team membership due to a special population or contextual issue at a particular institution. For example, the ADA Coordinator may be part of

the individual weekly team meetings if the college has a 70% ADA or learning disabled population. These team members include:

- Student Activities
- Case Manager
- Legal Counsel
- Admissions
- Greek Life

In addition, there is yet another group of individuals that are even more infrequently included when looking at national team data. These include:

- ADA coordinator
- Financial Aid
- Athletics
- University Chaplain
- Community Mental Health Staff (psychiatrist, counselor)
- Title IX
- Risk Management
- Veterans Affairs
- Multi-Cultural Affairs
- First Year Programs
- Student Success and Achievement Staff

When looking at team membership and size, its important to consider the context of your college or university. While a map or GPS can serve as a helpful guide, overly strict adherence to a set of standards without regard to the context can end up with someone driving his or her car into a lake.

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