

In law enforcement, as in many other professions, each state or governing entity may require members to take a certain number of hours of continuing education each year. While this represents a best practice in many fields, it may not be required of all professions represented on the Behavioral Intervention Team. Attending conferences (such as NaBITA) is a great way keep up on trends and gain additional knowledge in specific fields. There are also other mechanisms a BIT can utilize to share knowledge and gain understanding among team members. I advocate utilizing down times between semesters or over breaks to revitalize the team and better prepare them for the return of students.

Over my career in law enforcement, I have had many opportunities to engage in training of police cadets as well as new police officers. We use the terms “field training” or “coaching” to describe the period when a new officer is hired and paired with a veteran officer to learn valuable on-the-job skills. During many sessions while conducting field training, I often advocated the new officer utilize visual imagery to practice various scenario response. This tool enables an officer to picture any random scenario and walk through their own personal response to that given situation. This can be a life-saving exercise for new officers to visually imagine how they would respond to a critical incident. Advanced active shooter response classes and many Emergency Management courses advocate utilizing this same methodology. This low-cost training tool enables discussion with the officer to gauge their level of preparedness, and can easily translate to training for BIT members, as well.

Recently, while conducting instructor training in an annual in-service update course for police officers in the state of Pennsylvania, I happened across an appendix in the course materials that contained a very detailed case study of an active shooter incident. One of the most interesting aspects was the degree to which the male involved in the incident memorialized his thoughts and behavior leading up to the incident. I spoke with the BIT Chair and the Vice President who oversees the BIT to see if they felt there would be value in sharing this information with our BIT. The information was condensed, and a brief synopsis was disclosed to the team. Most of the presentation focused on the videos prepared by the perpetrator to illustrate his mental state, actions, and degree of preparation leading up to the event. The other members of the team found the exercise valuable as it illustrated many behaviors they have theorized would be present as warning signs.

The following are some suggestions for low cost/high value preparation training you can bring to your BIT:

1. **Training Summaries:** When members of the team attend training within their discipline, ask them to give a short presentation at the following BIT meeting.

- This can be a valuable tool to broaden understanding for the other members of what exactly are relevant topics to their professional development.
2. **Table-top exercises:** Have members create scenarios that the group can provide responses for as they would in real life. This can help develop greater understanding among newer members and refresh senior members of the team with incidents that do not present frequently. These can be as simple or elaborate as you want.
 3. **Case studies:** If a member comes across a valuable illustrative case they wish to present to the team (as described above), the team can share the learning and insight among all members. Be certain not to disclose confidential or protected information.
 4. **Training videos:** If any member of the team acquires or reviews video presentations beneficial to the group, share them at a meeting when the agenda is light.
 5. **Review/discussion of journal articles:** Utilizing professional publications and relevant articles can aid in discussion and learning among team members. As professionals on the BIT we all read articles that can be of value. Provide an opportunity for team members to share articles and insights as part of a training day, or reserve 10 minutes at the end of every other meeting for members to present a brief summary.

There are many avenues to explore how to increase the function and effectiveness of your BIT. We all appreciate the breaks during the school year as a time to focus on other demanding tasks, but we also should recognize the opportunity to incorporate regular training into the annual team calendar. This dedication to team development will foster understanding among members of other disciplines and build additional cohesion to your BIT.

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