

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is a formal agreement between two or more parties, used to establish official partnerships. Some schools choose to create an MOU with local groups and agencies to better address conflicts that may occur on or around campus. While this may be useful, it is worth considering the purpose of the MOU before launching into meetings and draft copies. Is there truly a need for a formalized MOU, or would students be better served through less formal outreach and discussions with the local community? Sometimes, conflicts are better addressed through the building of relationships, trust, and a shared mission, rather than a formal MOU.

Parallel to an MOU, BIT members are often asked to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to help prevent gossip and lax information-sharing. However, it is often the case that when a team has trouble with members oversharing information, individual conversations with the problematic team members are more beneficial. Like an MOU, the legwork should be focused more on the development of relationships, trust, and collaborative processes, as opposed to the resulting punishment of breaking an NDA.

Important things to keep in mind when developing MOUs for schools and hospitals:

- Key elements to creating a memorandum of understanding:
  - Define the need and state the purpose
  - Define scope for each party involved
  - Define and update protocols & procedures
  - Provide outline of processes in an ideal circumstance
  - Set communication expectations
  
- A successful MOU should:
  - Increase opportunities for information sharing
  - Address any theoretical conflict between parties
  - Ask each side to “bring something to the table”
  - Keep student care/best interest of the student in mind
  - Be reviewed annually to look for areas of improvement

Brian Van Brunt, Ed.D.  
Executive Director, NaBITA