



## **BIT Orientation Video**

### **Role of the Counselor**

Presented by: Erin Halligan-Avery, Ph.D., Director, Wellness Programs and Services,  
Rochester Institute of Technology

Congratulations on your role as a Counselor on the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT). Your role is critical to this team's success, but also one of the more complex roles on the team. The following video will help you better understand your new role and how to best serve the BIT effectively.

### **Overall Purpose of the BIT**

A student is impacted by many people, systems, and offices on a college campus. For this reason, the individuals selected to represent their area on the BIT each provide unique and important information to help the team best understand what the student may be experiencing and how to best connect that student with resources. You, as a counselor, are one of those important pieces. You have critical information that will benefit the team. How and when you choose to share that information is what makes your job complex.

### **Prep Work**

Arriving to the BIT meeting prepared and in-the-know will help you feel confident that you are sharing only the most necessary and appropriate information. It is recommended that you:

- Have a general awareness of what students are on the list and if they are known to counseling.
- Gather specific student information when appropriate.
- Determine if there is a ROI already in place.
- Speak with other clinicians to gather additional information as appropriate.
- Decide what you can and cannot share about each student.

### **Participating in Team Meetings**

As a counselor you may have clinical knowledge about a student - information that was shared with you or one of your colleagues confidentially in a counselor/client relationship. If a Release of Information (ROI) is in place, you have permission to share relevant information with the team as you deem appropriate. Without a ROI, you are not likely to feel comfortable sharing the details of this relationship, and that is acceptable. You may also want to consider implementing an Expanded Informed



Consent which would give you more latitude in sharing information with the BIT when needed. See NaBITA's 2018 Whitepaper *Role of the Counselor on the BIT* for more information on this.

As a BIT member, you are also serving in the role of consultant. You are the expert on mental health issues for the BIT. You may be asked to offer general expertise or generalized knowledge about "someone who is presenting in this way", or "someone with this diagnosis". You can speak generally and openly, offering advice about how you might support someone in a particular situation. As a consultant, you are not offering client-specific information, just general knowledge and expertise.

Remember that the goal of the BIT is to get as much information as possible about a student of concern so future plans can be made. Don't mistake this strong desire for information as a demand for specific, client details. Very often that level of detail is not desired, nor necessary. Most often the team wants to know if a student is connected with support, if they are attending sessions (i.e. receiving support), and if any additional help is needed.

### **Post-Meeting**

Once the BIT meeting has adjourned, share relevant information gleaned from the BIT back to your clinical staff. This cyclical relationship will help educate your colleagues about your role on the BIT and inform them how the BIT operates effectively. Creating a "we're all in this together" philosophy goes a long way in comprehensively supporting the student.

Upon speaking with your clinical staff, determine if additional information can or should be shared with the BIT to aid in the service to the student. It is not always necessary to wait until the next BIT meeting to share this information. Timely sharing of key information (specifically if there is a threat or heightened concern) will support the health and safety of that student as well as the rest of your campus community.

Remember, the ultimate goal of the BIT is to make sure the student is as connected as possible. Early identification and resource connections are key. Your role on the BIT is important, even critical, to the overall functioning of the team as well as the student's well-being.

For more on this topic:

Van Brunt, B., Sokolow, B., Halligan-Avery, E., Ulmer, L., Gunn, J. E., Pescara-Kovach, L., Murphy,



A., Denino, D. J., Schiemann, M. Raleigh, MJ, & Francis, P. C. (2018). The role of the counselor on the behavioral intervention team. *NaBITA Whitepaper*.