

**D·PREP**  
SAFETY DIVISION  
BIT/CARE STANDARDS

# MEMBERSHIP





## Where Do We Start?

Whether forming a new Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) or revisiting an existing one, the starting point is always the people. While policy and process matter, one of the strongest predictors of team effectiveness is the structure, diversity, and consistency of its membership. Getting the right people at the table with the right roles, authority, training, and perspectives lays the groundwork for meaningful intervention and support.

## What Does the Research Say About Membership?

Multiple qualitative studies in higher education<sup>1</sup> consistently emphasize the following:

- ❖ Clearly defined roles help streamline decision-making.
- ❖ Stable participation supports trust and continuity.
- ❖ Functional diversity, beyond just titles, enhances outcomes.
- ❖ Institutional size, structure, and mission should shape composition.
- ❖ Team dynamics, including communication style and training, impact overall performance.

Research from the K-12 field<sup>2</sup> echoes similar findings, highlighting the value of multidisciplinary collaboration and strong administrative backing.

## How Big Should the Team Be?

In practice, effective teams tend to have between seven and eight core members. This size allows for multiple viewpoints without overwhelming the process. Smaller teams may struggle with quorum and overburdened roles, while larger teams often experience inconsistent attendance or diminished engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> Armstrong, S. L. (2020). An Examination of the Implementation of Behavioral Intervention Teams in Community Colleges (Doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Bowles, W. R. (2022). Behavioral Intervention Teams at Regional Universities: A Qualitative Analysis of Team Composition, Function, and Effectiveness (Doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas). <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/4113>

Craig, L. E. (2022). Examining Perceptions of BIT/CARE Team Effectiveness in Higher Education (Doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Lloyd, R. R. (2021). A Qualitative Exploration of Behavioral Intervention Teams in Higher Education (Doctoral dissertation, Western Kentucky University). <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/diss/89>

<sup>2</sup> Kutash, K. M., Lefley, P. J., & Duchnowski, N. A. (2006). A Framework for Building and Sustaining Effective School-Based Intervention Teams. *The Journal of Special Education*, 40(3), 156–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00224669060400030401>

## Who Should Be on the Team?

Ideally, team membership should include student conduct, the Dean, the Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) or head of student services, the counseling center director, the residential life director, and law enforcement/campus safety. Beyond these five members, it would be useful to identify another five or so from areas such as 504/ADA accommodations, Title IX, a faculty representative and perhaps student activities, athletics, human resources, and/or institutional equity. This approach ensures a balance between those who can enact interventions and those who remain closely connected to various parts of campus life.

- ❖ Student Conduct, VPSA, or Dean of Students (case management and policy integration)
- ❖ Counseling Services (mental health expertise and continuity of care)
- ❖ Campus Safety or Police (threat assessment and situational response)
- ❖ Housing or Residential Life (for residential institutions)
- ❖ Student Affairs Leadership (institutional authority and resource coordination)
- ❖ Disability Services or 504/ADA Coordinator (legal compliance and support planning)
- ❖ Title IX or Sexual Misconduct Advocacy (due process and equity considerations)
- ❖ Faculty Liaison (instructional insight and faculty engagement)
- ❖ Academic Advising or Retention (student success planning)
- ❖ Athletics or Greek Life Advisors (access to closed communities)
- ❖ Career Services or Academic Support (co-curricular interventions)
- ❖ Human Resources (employee support and parallel concerns)

This list should be revisited regularly to ensure alignment with current campus structures and needs. It is important that they regularly train with the team so they are aware of best practices, common language, and the team process.

### K-12 Adaptation

In K-12 settings, similar functions are often referred to under different titles.

- ❖ Principal = Dean of Students or VPSA
- ❖ School Resource Officer = Campus Police
- ❖ Guidance Counselor = Mental Health Counselor
- ❖ Student Discipline = Conduct Officer
- ❖ School Nurse, Social Worker, and Special Education Coordinators often serve integral roles

The underlying principle remains the same: teams should blend authority with frontline insight, while maintaining a size and structure that supports effective collaboration.

### Best Practices for Team Membership

- ❖ Keep membership between 5 and 10 consistent participants.
- ❖ Document and clarify members' roles and expectations.
- ❖ Ensure diversity across identity and institutional role.
- ❖ Conduct shared training that includes communication, decision-making, and cultural competency.
- ❖ Include at least one long-serving member to provide institutional continuity.
- ❖ Align team composition with your campus context and capacity.

### Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- ❖ Selecting members based on availability rather than function.
- ❖ Creating large teams "just in case" without a clear role for each participant.
- ❖ Allowing a single dominant voice to direct team decisions.
- ❖ Treating membership as fixed rather than revisiting it annually.

## What Are the Common Mistakes When Building a Team?

- ❖ Oversized Teams: Too many members can lead to reduced engagement and hesitation to share sensitive information.
- ❖ Undersized Teams: Limited perspectives and availability can delay or derail the response process.
- ❖ Blended Roles: At smaller institutions, one person may cover multiple domains, making role clarity essential.
- ❖ Lack of Diversity: Without diverse identities and viewpoints, teams risk missing critical context and reducing trust across campus.
- ❖ Inconsistent Attendance: When participation fluctuates, institutional memory and cohesion suffer.

## Conclusion

Membership decisions directly impact the function and credibility of BIT/CARE teams. Whether building from the ground up or making targeted changes, the goal is to assemble a team with the authority to act, the insight to understand context, and the trust to collaborate effectively. A well-composed team builds the foundation for safer, more supportive campus communities.

## Next Steps for Your BIT/CARE Team

1. Review your current roster.
2. Identify any missing perspectives or overloaded roles.
3. Establish shared expectations around participation and communication.
4. Incorporate training sessions into your annual calendar.
5. Reassess team composition as part of your yearly planning cycle.