

Tacoma Community College

Behavioral Intervention and Threat
Assessment Team

Operations Manual

Rationale

In response to the Virginia Tech shootings, the state Governor's Panel Report identified factors that contributed to the incident and made recommendations for response by institutions of higher education, including the formation of threat assessment teams. Such teams are designed to "connect the dots" regarding students in distress and respond appropriately to reduce risk.

Purpose

The Tacoma Community College Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment Team (BITA) serves as a central network focused on prevention and early intervention in situations involving students experiencing serious distress or engaging in harmful or disruptive behaviors. The BITA team receives, assesses and responds to reports of concerning or troublesome behaviors of students, employees or others that may affect the College community. BITA's primary focus is to provide support for individuals through referrals to internal and external resources while addressing threats to, and safety of, the College community.

Mission Statement

The Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment Team at Tacoma Community College supports the college community in maintaining a healthy learning and working environment by supporting the personal well-being of every student through a proactive approach of early intervention, risk assessment, and referral to students in need.

Goals:

- Serve as a resource for faculty, staff, administration, and students in responding to students who exhibit concerning behaviors.
- Gather necessary information to perform a risk assessment.
- Make recommendations on intervention strategies.
- Serve as a referral source to connect individuals with campus and community supports.
- Track and monitor student incidents utilizing Maxient as the essential, main campus reporting tool.

BITA Membership

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Alternates:

If the chair is unavailable or absent, the director for Access Services will serve as proxy for the BITA team.

The BITA team will consult with the faculty member's academic dean to determine if the reported incident should be handled as a classroom management issue, a misconduct issue, or a threat assessment case. Judgement about the seriousness of a case should be made by the BITA team because the team may have additional information that may alter the seriousness of the incident.

Roles and Responsibilities**Chair**

The Chair will be the Student Conduct Administrator or designee who has the authority to manage student behavior and who understands Student Affairs policies and procedures and the Code of Student Conduct. The chair will:

- Receive Maxient notifications of submitted reports.
- Prioritize report submissions to bring to this team.
- Ensure that all BITA procedures conform to applicable ethical, legal, and best practices.
- Monitor and update policies and procedures as the law and best practices change.
- Serve as the designated point of contact for staff, faculty, students, and others who may have concerns about an individual.
- Collect data on BITA activities, including annual reports.
- Schedule regular and ad hoc meetings of the BITA.

Counseling Representatives

The Counseling representative is responsible for:

- Leading the process of assessing the risk that a student may pose to self or others, including referral to off-campus assessment.
- Providing assistance to the reported person(s), and appropriate campus personnel, regarding the plan of action given the details of a specific case.
- Coordinating/referring students to campus and community support services.
- Consulting with other health professionals as needed.
- Receive Maxient notifications of submitted reports.

Public Safety Representatives

The Public Safety representative is responsible for:

- Gathering background information regarding students of concern.
- Providing safety planning in threat situations.
- Following up with the person who submitted the BITA incident report.
- Coordinating with local law enforcement, as necessary.

Campus Representatives

The role of other campus representatives is to provide input and perspective on cases that escalate and could potentially harm the wider campus community. Representatives with expertise in disability services, student engagement, academic advising, and international programs bring a unique perspective and approach when supporting unique students and their individual needs.

Legal council is provided by the TCC/SBCTC legal counsel and the Office of the State Attorney General. ***All team members will undergo appropriate training in threat assessment protocols and policy and will attend training and professional development as needed.***

Other members of the college community may be called upon to provide additional information regarding a student on an ad hoc basis when appropriate.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of all reports and of student and staff information will be preserved to the greatest extent possible, understanding that the College may have a need to share information to protect the safety of the campus community and others.

Communication

Since this is a confidential internal team, communication will be directed from the chair to the proper BITA team members. There is no campus-wide communication that comes from BITA about cases that are reported. Communication will be maintained between the claimant and members of the BITA team. All FERPA guidelines will be upheld.

A dedicated BITA page should exist that directs individuals who are concerned about a student or employee. A link to an electronic BITA report will be accessible.

Meetings

The Behavioral Intervention Team has three core members who will meet at least monthly and as often as needed to address cases and discuss topics related to intervention, best practices in higher education and resources available to the team. The

three core members of the BITA team are the chair, a representative from Campus Safety, and a representative from Counseling.

The Dean of Retention and Student Success establishes the meeting schedule for each academic year at the start of the fall quarter. In addition, the Vice President of Student Affairs, or any other team member may call an emergency meeting as needed. The Dean of Retention and Student Success will inform all members of the time and location of the meeting. For efficiency, most BITA meetings will be held via Zoom.

BITA Records

The BITA Team shall maintain confidential records for all threat assessment cases and all follow-up and reports that derive from threat assessment proceedings. These records will be entered in a secure, protected and searchable database that will have the capacity to monitor ongoing cases and provide longitudinal follow-up and assessment. The software utilized is Maxient, a student conduct system for managing student discipline, academic integrity, Title IX complaints, care/concern records, and issues of campus safety.

Reporting Protocol

It is the responsibility of all members of the TCC community to report intimidating, threatening, and worrisome behavior. The BITA team, in cooperation with the college administration, will provide guidance and training to help faculty, staff and students recognize troubling behavior that may be a cause for concern.

In cases where a student or employee's behavior poses an imminent threat to themselves or others, first contact 911 or the TCC campus safety department at (253) 566-5111. Then, a BITA report form should be submitted to appropriately document the concern.

The BITA team and the college administration will also encourage "a culture of reporting" to prevent violence and provide support and referral when needed. Staff, faculty, administration, students, and community members are all encouraged to report intimidating, threatening, and concerning behavior so the BITA can respond proactively in addressing incidents. An incident, in this context, is an event which does not warrant immediate intervention.

Reports and referrals shall be handled discreetly and professionally to protect both the respondent (accused) and the claimant (reporter). All deliberations of the BITA team will be confidential.

Prohibited Conduct and Sanctions

Prohibited conduct and college sanctions are defined and enumerated in the TCC Code of Conduct and available online [WAC 132V-121-060 TCC Code of Student Conduct](#). Sanctions for a violation of the code of student conduct include warnings, reprimands, referrals to counseling and outside community agencies, disciplinary probation, disciplinary probation with revoked college privileges, suspension, and expulsion.

Reporting Procedures

The success of the BITA process centers on the campus community's commitment to early intervention and to reporting concerns, big or small, so patterns of behavior can be identified and addressed in a timely manner.

The college has multiple reporting mechanisms in place on the campus for identifying and reporting threatening behavior and concerns. Members are encouraged to be as specific and concrete as possible in describing observed behaviors. Try to focus on the person's actions more than your own reactions or emotions.

In the event of an emergency that requires immediate intervention, call 911 or Campus Public Safety at 5111.

Immediate Danger → **Call 911/Campus Public Safety at 5111**

Immediate Danger is presented through acts of immediate threats of violence and must be reported immediately by calling 9-911 from a campus phone and/or TCC Campus Safety at 5111. This reporting of immediate danger applies to all staff, faculty, and students. Examples of imminent threats or danger include:

- Suicide threats or recent attempts at suicide
- Physical threats or aggression toward another person
- Severe rage and verbal threats to kill or harm someone
- Possession of drugs or alcohol or under the influence of drugs and alcohol
- Overly aggressive or hostile behavior towards others
- References to harming others or planning a violent event
- Brandishing guns, firearms, or other weapons

Threat/Concern that is troubling but does not require an immediate response → **BITA**

Examples of threatening behavior or incidents that should be referred to the BITA include:

- Evidence of suicidal thoughts expressed through writings, papers, posts, conversation
- Angry outbursts or intense and abnormal reactions to events
- Consistent disruption of teaching and learning in the classroom
- Preoccupation with violent themes, death, or destruction
- Stalking behaviors
- Evidence of hopelessness or despair
- Appearance of being overly nervous, tense, or tearful
- Loss of contact with reality
- Threats or inappropriate emails

Incident Report Form - “Concerning, Troublesome, or Threatening Behavior”

Staff, faculty, students, community members should report a threat or concern by filling out the BITA Form entitled, “Concerning, Troublesome, or Threatening Behavior Report Form” online. This is a new title, and a new form. *NOTE: this should be re-located on the TCC website; should be accessible to both internal **and external** users.*

The BITA Report form is the mechanism for notifying the BITA of potential problems and provides a standardized format that allows the team to track patterns of disruptive behavior as well as aggregate data on the nature and frequency of complaints. The reporting software utilized to document, collect, assign sanctions, send out communication to respondents, etc. is called Maxient. Information provided in the report may also be considered in determining appropriate disciplinary actions per the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

To make a report, go to (proposed) the TCC main campus home page, scroll down to the bottom of the home page, and **locate “Campus.” Click on the “Report a Concern”** and this will take you to the BITA landing page.

Once a Form is Submitted

Once the BITA report is submitted, it enters a secure database in Maxient, and certain BITA team members immediately receive the report via their TCC email. All information and reports will be handled in a confidential manner based on college policy, and state and federal laws. The team evaluates each report and meets regularly to discuss them. A member of BITA will reach out to the reporter to acknowledge receipt, ask clarifying questions if necessary, and briefly explain the action steps that the team may be taking to support and address the person of concern. If deemed appropriate, a member of BITA will then reach out directly to the person of concern to assess their situation and collaboratively develop an action plan to support the individual with referrals to internal and external resources as appropriate.

If the individual of concern is perceived by the BITA team to be a risk to themselves or others, a threat assessment process is utilized. Through the threat assessment process, the BITA team will determine appropriate action steps to address the individual of concern while also prioritizing the safety of the campus community.

A BITA intervention may not be appropriate in every instance and reports may simply be logged in case there is a future pattern of behavior that needs to be addressed.

The most critical step is that concerning behavior is reported. Reports that fall into a different College process will be sent to the appropriate College officials. This includes Title IX matters, student conduct matters, discrimination and harassment matters, and general complaints. Remember that College employees also have [mandatory reporting requirements](#), including abuse of children and vulnerable adults.

Student Conduct matters will be handled in accordance with the procedures outlined in the [Student Conduct Code](#). The work of the BITA team is not intended to replace the current College disciplinary process.

The BITA team will consult with the faculty member's academic dean to determine if the reported incident should be handled as a classroom management issue, a misconduct issue, or a threat assessment case. Judgement about the seriousness of a case should be made by the BITA because the team may have additional information that may alter the seriousness of the incident.

BITA Assessment Process

Assessment is designed to distinguish between threatening and non-threatening cases to ensure the safety of the distressed individual as well as others involved. It also creates a baseline of information against which to assess future behavior and provides a means for implementing interventions to increase the likelihood of a positive and safe resolution.

Once a case is forwarded to the BITA team, the members meet in closed session to discuss, investigate, assess, and determine an action plan for the case.

Step 1: Identify person of concern and conduct initial screening.

Step 2: Gather all information necessary to evaluate the threat. Evaluate the person(s) and the context of the situation. Call additional witnesses if necessary.

Step 3: Assess the level of the threat through the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool (See Appendix A)

Step 4: Determine if the threat or situation presents an immediate danger. If yes, then contact TPD immediately or other appropriate agencies.

Step 5: Continue to evaluate the seriousness of the threat. Determine if the threat is a transient or substantive threat.

- Step 6: Continue a full inquiry of the threat and make appropriate assessments.
- Step 7: Formulate an action plan and intervention if appropriate.
- Step 8: Involve other offices, staff and resources as appropriate.
- Step 9: Develop a safety plan to resolve the conflict.
- Step 10: Refer the person to counseling or outside mental health services as needed.
- Step 11: Refer the person to disciplinary process as needed.
- Step 12: Implement plan and assign timetable of steps.
- Step 13: Continue to monitor and follow up until the case is resolved or closed.
- Step 14: Document decisions in Maxient.

The process may include some or all of the following:

- Interviews with others involved in the incident
- Interviews with the person alleged to have displayed concerning behavior
- Assessment by counselor/mental health professional
- Review of student's academic and disciplinary history
- Legal/criminal background check
- Use of the threat assessment model developed by the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management (NCHERM)

Based on the risk level determined by the team (Mild, Moderate, Elevated, Severe, Extreme) intervention strategies will be used to address the risk. (See Appendix A, Threat Assessment in the Campus Setting and Appendix C, Behavior/Threat Assessment Checklist).

Outcomes and Sanctions

The BITA team is empowered to take necessary action that is consistent with college policy and applicable law. The team aims to intervene early to provide support and referral as needed and impose sanctions as a last resort. Minor sanctions and decisions of BITA are not subject to appeal. However, in the case of a major sanction that involves suspension or expulsion from the college, the BITA will refer to the Dean of Retention and Student Success to initiate a disciplinary hearing process under the TCC Student Code of Conduct proceedings.

Outcomes and/or sanctions may include:

- Interventions and referrals to other staff, departments and resources within the college as needed
- Referral to the Student Conduct Administrator to initiate disciplinary proceedings. In cases where the BITA recommends a major sanction of suspension or expulsion from the college, the BITA will initiate a charge with the Dean to initiate the formal disciplinary process set forth by the TCC Student Code of Conduct.

- Referral to outside law enforcement officials.
- Referral to outside mental health agencies in the area.
- Voluntary mental health assessment.
- Mandatory mental health assessment and counseling as a condition of the student's continued enrollment at the college or as a condition of the student's subsequent enrollment or return to the college. This is not appealable and requires the following:
 - Secure counseling services with a licensed counselor and/or approved provider of mental health services. This does not include TCC faculty counselors.
 - Sign a release form that allows the college to 1) disclose the reasons for referral to the mental health provider; and 2) to verify from the provider of services that counseling has been completed and that sufficient progress has been made as a condition of return to TCC.
- Voluntary withdrawal or separation from the college.
- Continuation of monitoring, referral, and follow-up as needed.

Appendix A
Threat Assessment in the Campus Setting
Risk Levels as defined by NaBITA.org

Mild Risk

- Disruptive/Concerning Behavior
- Signs of distress
- No threat made or present

Moderate Risk

- More involved or repeated disruption
- Likely Distressed or low-level disturbance
- Vague or indirect threat
- Threat or information of threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail

Elevated Risk

- Seriously disruptive incident(s)
- Exhibiting clear distress or disturbance
- Threat made or present
- The threat is vague and indirect, but may be repeated or shared with multiple reporters
- Information about threat or threat itself is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail
- Threat lacks realism, or is repeated with variations
- Content of threat suggests it is unlikely to carry it out

Severe Risk

- Disturbed or advancing to dysregulation
- Threat made or present
- Threat is vague, but direct, or specific, but indirect
- Likely to be repeated or shared with multiple reporters
- Information about threat or threat itself is consistent, plausible or includes increasing detail of a plan (time, place, etc.)
- Threat likely to be repeated with consistency (may try to convince listener they are serious)

Extreme Risk

- Student is dysregulated (way off their baseline) or medically disabled
- Threat made or present
- Likely to be repeated or shared with multiple reporters
- Information about threat or threat itself is consistent, plausible or includes specific detail of a plan, often with steps already taken
- Threat may be repeated with consistency
- Content of threat suggests threatener will carry it out (reference to weapon, means, target)
- Threatener may appear detached

Appendix B
Responding to Student Misconduct:
Guidelines for Faculty

Code of Student Conduct

The Code of Conduct clarifies expectations for student conduct. Faculty and staff should be aware of the Code and feel comfortable referring to it. Copies of the Code are available online at [Standards for Student Conduct](#).

Preventing Misconduct in the Classroom

Taking time at the beginning of the quarter to clarify classroom conduct standards is highly recommended. It is a promising idea to provide specific information in your syllabus regarding classroom expectations and include a reference to the Student Code of Conduct.

Responding to Misconduct in the Classroom

Students at Tacoma Community College have due process rights. Taking the following steps ensures legal compliance:

1. Provide an oral (or in the case of an online class, email) warning at the time the inappropriate behavior occurs. This is often a good time to remind the entire class of your expectations. If the behavior continues proceed to step two.
2. Talk to the student individually after class or ask them to schedule a meeting with you (in an online class this may be a phone or email meeting). During the discussion clearly state your expectations and how the student is not currently meeting them. Clarify expectations and inform the student that continued inappropriate behavior will result in a request to leave the classroom and a referral to the Administrator for Student Conduct. **Document** incidents and conversations. NOTE: Steps 1 and 2 can occur in the same class period.
3. If the behavior persists or is so disruptive that immediate action must be taken, ask the student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. If the student refuses, contact Public Safety at x5111. Make a report to the Student Conduct Administrator and include all relevant information and documentation.
4. The conduct administrator will follow the process for adjudication outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct Procedures](#).

Appendix C
Behavior/Threat Assessment Checklist

Last Name	First Name	M.I.	SID
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Observed or known behaviors:

- Has access to weapons
- Appears to have a fascination with weapons or explosives
- Is knowledgeable about or has used weapons
- Has a history of brings a weapon to school
- Has made recent threats to act out violently
- Has provided evidence of making plans to act out violently, named a specific target
- History of arrests/convictions for violent acts
- Is brooding over an event in which he/she was perceived to be unfairly treated
- Expresses unreasonable feelings of being persecuted by others
- Has experienced a recent life stressor or event
- Appears to be a loner and reveals no close friends
- Has a history of being bullied or teased
- Does not show concern for legal or personal consequences
- Appears to lack appropriate empathy or remorse
- Has threatening and/or loud speech, disorganized speech
- Is observed as maintaining prolonged stares
- Is observed with signs of agitation (pacing, clenched fists, etc.)
- Reveals feelings of depression, hopelessness, despair
- Refuses to communicate
- Known to abuse alcohol or illicit drugs
- Constantly blames others and refuses to take responsibility
- Identifies with offenders, praises other school violence events
- Engaged in property damage
- Other students/staff/faculty are afraid of this student
- Says they have no options or there is no way out for them
- Appears suicidal
- Prior suicide attempts and self infliction of injuries
- History of obsessively following or stalking others
- Has thought insertion, someone putting thoughts into their head
- Auditory, command, or visual hallucinations
- Diminished self care (dirty, disheveled, poor hygiene)
- Psychiatric disorder diagnosis
- Gang membership

Behavioral Intervention Team Assessment:

- High Risk
- Moderate Risk
- Low Risk

Acknowledgments

TCC acknowledges Lakeland College, IL, Madonna University, and Pierce College for information used in preparation of this handbook.

Thanks, and acknowledgment to NaBITA for the use of the Threat Assessment in the Campus Setting document published in January 2009.