The Behavioral Intervention Team
Stella and Charles Guttman Community College CUNY 2015-2016

Prepared by the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards (June 2016)
Meet the Team

Tier I:

- Charles. H. Pryor III, Chair (Dean Student Engagement)
- Carolee Ramsay, Conduct Officer
- Anastasia Koutsidis, Public Safety
- Courtney Stevenson, Wellness Clinician

Tier II:

- Lynette Phillips, Legal
- Linda Merians, Chief Diversity Officer
- Nicole Saint-Louis, Faculty
- Crystal Vasquez, AccessABILITY Services
Introduction

Guttman Community College (GCC) is concerned about the safety, health, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff community. As one facet of its outreach effort, the College’s Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) has been established to identify, assess, and monitor students displaying levels of distress, disruption, or behavioral dysfunction that might warrant timely intervention. The team’s primary goal is to provide threat assessments and early intervention before a crisis arises.

The Guttman BIT team typically meets monthly or as needed to identify conditions of concern and discuss how best to support distressed students. The team includes staff from the Office of Student Engagement, Judicial Affairs, Wellness, AccessABILITY Services, Legal Counsel, Academic Affairs, and Public Safety. When necessary, the team offers resources for timely intervention, treatment, referrals and follow-up for students in distress.

Please email GuttmanBIT@guttman.cuny.edu for more information.
Purpose of the GCC Behavior Interventional Team

- Provide threat assessments and early interventions before a crisis arises
- Provide a forum/space for referrals
- Periodic presentations on identifying students
- Identify and monitor student behaviors and offer support services to prevent future escalation and crisis

Objectives of BIT

- Recommend mandated psychological assessment and/or medical leave/withdrawal, when necessary, pursuant to CUNY’s Medical Withdrawal and Re-Entry Policy and procedures.
- Balance FERPA, HIPAA and counselor privilege with College need-to-know and emergency communication needs.
- Protect the campus community in cases of imminent threats by students, staff, and faculty to self and others.
Threat Assessment

Once a threat has been identified or reported, the Tier I team members will conduct a threat assessment team and determine the next best course of action. Many individuals who make threats do not actually pose a danger once the nature and circumstances of the threat are understood. Assessment is based on:

- Examination of the context in which the threat was made and what conflict or problem motivated the person to make it.

- Judgments regarding the person's potential for carrying out the threat rely on evidence that the person has engaged in behavior that indicates the capability and intent to carry it out.

- Based on this assessment, the team develops a response plan. Such plans can range from clarifying a misunderstanding or informally resolving a dispute to taking formal administrative or legal action. Each case requires an individualized approach.
GCC’s Strengths for Intervention

- Our instructional team and cohort model=communication
- Only one point of entry/access to building
- Public Safety Presence 24/7
- Action Plans are frequently used by advisors, Wellness, and AccessABILITY Services
- Small size-easy to identify students in distress
- High touch and wrap-around support

Our Challenges

- Few professionals to engage in CUNY processes increasing potential for conflict of interest (e.g. Medical Withdrawal and Re-entry Policy and Procedures)
- Our cohort model students are hyper-bonded also making the transition from high-school to college less effective
- Space constraints challenges confidential information and discussions
- More professional development and training necessary for the Team
## Who Should I Tell?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Safety</th>
<th>Student Engagement</th>
<th>BIT Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate safety concern (perceived as real threat)</td>
<td>Classroom behavior that is not threatening to the college community</td>
<td>Behavior of a student is of concern but not in need of an immediate action and or response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual is a danger to him/herself or others</td>
<td></td>
<td>BIT Report should be filed. See <a href="https://www.example.com">Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)</a> for more details.</td>
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</table>
Classroom Behavioral Intervention Process

Behavioral Observation
• Bring to Instructional Team
• Discuss with SSA

Classroom Incident
• Contact Public Safety for immediate response
• Contact DSE for an issue that is non-threatening

Public Safety/OSE
• Immediate action taken by DSE-removal of student/law enforcement actions/advanced medical care
• OSE-Behavioral Contract and/or Warning and/or Disciplinary Action
• BIT Team notifications as needed/appropriate
Referral Reference Chart

Basic Distress Signals

- **Depression.** While we all may feel depressed from time to time, “normal” depressions may consist of only one or two symptoms and usually pass within days. Clinically depressed people will exhibit multiple symptoms for a longer period of time. Some of these symptoms are sleep disturbances, poor concentration, change in appetite, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, withdrawal, poor hygiene, loss of self-esteem, and preoccupation with death.

- **Agitation or Acting Out.** This would represent a departure from normal or socially appropriate behavior. It might include being disruptive, exhibiting restlessness or hyperactivity, being antagonistic or emotional volatility (crying easily, losing temper).
Disorientation. Some distressed students may seem “out of it.” You may witness a diminishment in awareness of what is going on around them, forgetting or losing things, misperception of facts or reality, rambling or disconnected speech, and behavior that seems out of context or bizarre.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Signs of intoxication during class or interaction with college officials are indicative of a problem that requires attention.

Suicidal Thoughts. Most people who attempt suicide communicate early messages about their distress. These messages can range from “I don’t want to be here”, to a series of vague “good-byes”, to “I’m going to kill myself.” All suicidal references should be taken seriously.

Violence and Aggression. You may become aware of students who may be dangerous to others. This may be manifested by physically violent behavior, verbal threats, threatening e-mail or letters, harassing or stalking behavior, and papers or exams that contain violent or threatening material.
Dealing with Distressed Students: Best Practices

As a member of the Guttman Community College community you may come into contact with students who are experiencing personal distress or difficulties coping with college. Students may reveal problems to you through personal communication or indirectly by their general behavior. Being aware of distress signals, methods of intervention, and sources of help for the student can help you feel more in control of situations that may arise, and put you in a better position to be helpful.

**Dealing with severe, disruptive behavior in class:** If in your judgment a student is exhibiting hostile, belligerent, and/or out of control behavior you need to take immediate action.

1. **Safety First!** Always keep safety in mind when you interact with a disruptive student. Maintain a safe distance and a route of escape should you need it. If danger to you or the student seems imminent, call Public Safety at x38101 (646-313-8101). There is a phone available in each classroom, however if no phone is available where you are located, quietly, send another person to the nearest office or emergency phone to call.

2. **Avoid Escalation.** Distressed students can sometimes be easily provoked. Never embarrass a student in front of other students. Take a calm and matter-of-fact approach. You may want to ask the disruptive student to leave the class. Be supportive but firm. Avoid threatening, humiliating, and intimidating responses. When a student is hostile and defiant it is best to avoid a confrontation. One can always remind them of rules at a later time.
3. Notify the Guttman Community College BIT Team (Behavioral Intervention Team). Once the student is removed by Security or has left the class on his or her own, report the incident to the BIT Team by completing a report available on our website or hard copy. You can also discuss the situation with a BIT Team Tier 1 Member (Charles Pryor x38818, Anastasia Koutsidis x38001, Carolee Ramsay x38019, or Courtney Stevenson x38165). Depending on the situation, a recommendation and intervention by the BIT Team may serve to resolve the situation. In some cases, depending upon the severity of the disruption, it may be necessary to pursue disciplinary action, including suspension from Guttman Community College.
Intervention Guidelines: Students Not Disruptive

Dealing with students who may express a problem, but are not disruptive in class:

- A student may come to you with a problem or you may notice a problem from their behavior. If you notice a problem, but the student has not asked you for help, approach the student in writing or orally and suggest a meeting after class. If you would like a consultation regarding how to talk to the student prior to your meeting, contact the Wellness Clinician, Courtney Stevenson to arrange a meeting time.

- When you meet with the student indicate in a supportive manner that you have noticed that the student seems “troubled/upset”, “tuned out”.

- If the student is willing to discuss his or her problems with you, listen attentively without making too many responses or suggestions. Discuss referring him or her to the Wellness Clinician for free and confidential counseling services.

- If the student does not want to discuss any personal matters with you, gently indicate that there is a counselor on campus willing to meet with them at no cost to the student. Give the student the location and phone number of the Wellness Clinician. You may want to offer to accompany the student to the office if you are comfortable with this action and/or offer to call on their behalf to say that the student will be making an appointment.
BIT Communication Process and Logistics Questions

○ What does the campus need to have in place to be able to handle an emergency?
  - Public Safety
  - Access to advanced medical care
  - Staff training in mental illness and aggressive behavior

○ How do we convene in an emergency?
  - Fill out a BIT report or if it’s an immediate threat, call Public Safety
  - Public Safety will notify DPS, Anastasia who will notify tier 1 members via email and or phone
  - If a tier 1 member is notified prior to DPS being notified, he/she will contact the DPS immediately
  - A decision will be made on when and where to meet
  - If an incident happens during normal business hours any available tier 1 member will meet and the others will be called at the earliest time possible

○ What constitutes an emergency or a reason to meet off schedule?
  - Immediate threat to the college community and or the student in question

○ Can we convene remotely/do we have the technology in place?
  - Conference calls /email
BIT Reporting Protocol

Report/Referral generated through online form/email → Additional information may be needed from reporter or others → NaBITA Assessment Tool is used to assess → Assessment made by Tier 1 (first responders). If non-emergency, appropriate response developed during regular meetings → Appropriate intervention is determined and action taken. Regular follow-ups and tracking → Feedback is provided (when appropriate for federal and state laws).
Additional Information and Resources

1. **Using Conduct as a Learning Strategy- Faculty PD 2015**

2. **Behavior Guide Adopted from National BIT (NABITA.org).**
   **See Below:**

   **Examples of Disruptive Behaviors***

   - Taking/making calls, texting, using smart phones for social media, etc.
   - Students misuse technology in the classroom. Sneaking text messages from beneath the desk or having a laptop open to Facebook™ or other social media site during a lecture.
   - Frequent interruption of professor while talking and asking of non-relevant, off-topic questions.
   - Inappropriate or overly revealing clothing in classroom; including extremely sexually provocative clothes, pajamas or sleepwear in the classroom.
   - Crosstalk or carrying on side conversations while the professor is speaking.
   - Interruptions such as frequent use of the restroom, smoke breaks, etc.
   - Poor personal hygiene that leads to a classroom disruption or lack of focus.
   - Use of alcohol or other substances in class. Attending class while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
   - Entitled or disrespectful talk to professor or other students.
   - Arguing grades or “grade grubbing” for extra points after the professor requests the student to stop.
   - Eating or consuming beverages in class without permission (or against the class norms).
   - Showing up to class in strange clothing (dressed in military gear, Halloween costumes when it is not Halloween, etc.)
   - Reading magazines, newspapers (yes, they still read them, although usually the campus one), books or studying for other classes/doing other homework.
Examples of Dangerous Behaviors *

- Racist or otherwise **fixed** (not just expressed once to press a button) thoughts such as “Women should be barefoot and pregnant,” “Gays are an abomination to God and should be punished,” “Muslims are all terrorists and should be wiped off the earth.”
- Bullying behavior focused on students in the classroom.
- Direct communicated threat to professor or another student such as: “I am going to kick your ass” or “If you say that again, I will end you.”
- Prolonged non-verbal passive aggressive behavior such as sitting with arms crossed, glaring or staring at professor, refusal to speak or respond to questions or directives.
- Self-injurious behavior such as cutting or burning self during class, or exposing previously unexposed self-injuries.
- Physical assault such as pushing, shoving or punching.
- Throwing objects or slamming doors.
- Storming out of the classroom when upset.
- Conversations that are designed to upset other students such as descriptions of weapons, killing or death.
- Psychotic, delusional or rambling speech.
- Arrogant or rude talk to professor or other students.
- Objectifying language that depersonalizes the professor or other students.

Examples of Disruptive Behaviors Online

- Student post non-relevant spam or unrelated personal advertising material in the forum discussion board.
- Frequent interruption of the professors questions, threaded discussion posts with non-relevant comments or off topic personal discussions.
- Inappropriate or overly revealing pictures shared with members of the online community through the profile.
- Choosing a screenname or profile name that is offensive to others such as Smokingthedope420@university.edu or assman69@university.edu.
• Posting or making comments while drunk or intoxicated. Attending online class discussions
  or lectures while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
• Arrogant, entitled, rude or disrespectful emails or messages to professor or other students.
• Arguing grades or “grade grubbing” for extra points after the professor requests the student to
  stop.
• Inciting other students to argue with the professor over grades or other assessment
  related expectations.

Examples of Dangerous Behaviors Online

• Racist or otherwise fixated thoughts such as “Gays should be stoned like back in bible times,”
  “Men should go back to playing football and stop thinking so hard. Leave the mental heavy
  lifting to the ladies in the class,” “Muslims and Mormons are cults and should be wiped off
  the planet,” and others posted to the discussion boards to troll for a response or to incite an
  electronic “riot.”
• Bullying and teasing behavior through messages, emails or online hazing.
• Direct communicated threat to professor or another student such as: “I am going to kick
  your ass” or “If you say that again, I will end you.”
• Prolonged passive aggressive behavior such as constant disagreement with everyone and
  everything in class, challenging the professor’s credentials, refusal to respond questions or
  directives.
• Mentioning of self-injurious behavior such as cutting or burning self or suicidal thoughts
  or intentions in online posts
• Threats of physical assault such as pushing, shoving or punching.
• Threats of online assaults like hacking a website, sharing personal information or
  pictures online without permission
• Conversations that are designed to upset other students such as descriptions of weapons,
  killing or death.
• Psychotic, delusional or rambling speech in posts.
• Arrogant, entitled, rude or disrespectful messages to professor or other students.
• Objectifying language that depersonalizes the professor or other students.