



NaBITA Urges K-12 Schools to Adopt Preventive Model of Threat Assessment

Established protocols, team training, early intervention, success planning and advanced tracking are all necessary to curb school violence, per Carolyn Reinach Wolf, past-President of the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association

March 20, 2018 – Berwyn, PA – In light of the 17 school shootings in 2018 to date, including the tragic loss of 17 individuals in Parkland, Florida and the shooting today at Great Mills High School in Maryland, **the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA)** strongly advocates that K-12 schools across the country implement a **Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) model**, in which multi-disciplinary groups of designated individuals conduct behavioral threat assessments to identify, monitor and support individuals who pose a potential danger to themselves and/or others. A growing number of colleges and universities, as well as workplaces, have already adopted BIT.

The BIT model is an evolution of the Threat Assessment or Student Assistance Team models, which are more prevalent in K-12 schools. The latter approaches have traditionally charged teams with assessing a threat that may already exist. As an alternative, BIT seeks to identify the earliest indications of a potential crisis rather than wait for clear signs of an impending threat. Its approach incorporates the school, the district, community resources and the family to support the student. Teams develop success plans that may include disability support, treatment requirements and academic assistance.

“The difference of the BIT model is that it’s designed to be preventive rather than reactive,” said Carolyn Reinach Wolf, past-President of NaBITA and Director of the Mental Health Law practice at the law firm Abrams Fensterman. “Given how heartbreakingly common school shootings have become, prevention must become the focus for K-12 administrators.”

Ms. Wolf, who counsels families whose loved ones suffer from serious mental illness and/or substance abuse, says there is often more intervention options for troubled individuals in the K-12 years, as once young people become legal adults at age 18, mental hygiene and HIPAA laws can make it difficult and complicated to access needed treatment.

BIT calls for team members to receive training, meet regularly and utilize an established protocol for the purpose of tracking “red flags” in individual or group behavior. In the event warning signs appear, the team examines reports of disruptive, problematic, or concerning behavior or misconduct (from educators, coaches, friends, etc.), conducts an investigation, performs a threat

assessment, and determines the best mechanisms for support, intervention, warning/notification and response. It then deploys its resources and the resources of the community, and coordinates follow-up.

BIT members in K-12 schools commonly include:

- District Superintendents and/or Asst. Superintendents
- School Guidance Counselors
- School Psychologists/Counseling Directors
- District Counseling Coordinators
- School Health Professionals (e.g., School Nurse, PA, etc.)
- School/District Disability Service Director/Coordinator
- School Principal
- Asst. Principal responsible for student conduct
- District Legal Counsel
- School/District Faculty Representative
- District Media Relations/Public Relations Coordinator
- School/District PTA representative

The BIT model also promotes the use of advanced recordkeeping management techniques via database software to enable longitudinal tracking of student conduct over time to detect and assess trends, patterns and disturbances.

“Before tragedies occur, there are almost always warning signs, regardless if the individual in question is a child, adolescent or adult,” said Ms. Wolf. “Models that best equip schools to identify these signs and take appropriate action, immediately and over time, can offer real protection to students, educators and staff.”

The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) is an independent, not-for-profit organization for the support and professional development of behavioral intervention team members. It is committed to providing education, resources and support to professionals in schools and colleges, and in the workplace who endeavor every day to make their campuses and workplaces safer through caring prevention and intervention.

More information is available at <https://nabita.org/>.
