

What is BIT?

The Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) is a cross-functional team of professionals tasked with coordinating responses to student behaviors of concern. Designed as an interdisciplinary team that meets as needed, BIT assesses and implements intervention plans for students considered at-risk to themselves or others, be it socially, mentally, or physically.

What does BIT do?

- Balances the needs of "behaviorally at-risk" students with the safety and security of the larger college community.
- Responsible for ensuring that college policies and procedures relating to behavior and conduct are upheld and administered appropriately.
- The work to connect the dots for behaviorally at-risk students **does not replace** other classroom management or disciplinary processes.

When should I refer a student to BIT?

When behavior disrupts the mission and learning environment of Blackhawk Technical College students, faculty, staff, or community. For example:

- Student behavior that makes those around them feel vaguely uncomfortable, such as persistent incivility, bizarre behavior, or other behavioral concerns.
- Student behavior that makes routine work or teaching difficult includes high irritability, unruly, argumentative, and frequent noncompliance with instructor /staff directives.
- Student behavior that demonstrates a pattern that could potentially threaten the health and well-being of those around him/her, such as verbal threats and overly agitated, aggressive, and intimidating behaviors.
- Student email responses that seem off-topic and cause significant concern or worry, including expressions of hate, comments regarding violence to self or others, and vulgar language.
- Concern for a student's well-being. Student behavior examples include:
 - Extreme shifts of behavior, depression, and anxiety issues.
 - Suicidal thoughts or expressions, self-mutilating behaviors, and alcohol or drug abuse concerns.

If you feel an immediate threat, call 911, then call Campus Safety at 608-757-7617.

You are the Behavioral Intervention Team's best resource because you know the student. If you are comfortable doing so, tell the student you are concerned and ask if he/she is OK. In many cases, students will indicate that he/she could use some help, and you can refer them to the BIT Team.

Team members review the referral information and decide how to proceed best. However, reporting is the most critical step. The BIT will use professional discretion regarding information shared when working with the student.

Based on the details provided by the BIT referral form, the team will assess and determine which community resource(s) or service(s) will be offered. The student will then be contacted, and the behaviors of concern will be investigated by staff appropriate to the situation. The process is to help the student understand his/her behavior of concern and its effect on the environment and their success. Actions that the Behavioral Intervention Team might initiate include, but are not limited to, the following:

- No action is recommended at this time, pending further observation
- Assist faculty or staff in developing a plan of action
- The chair may discuss situations with faculty members
- Referral to existing on-campus support resources
- Referral to appropriate community resources
- Warning of conduct concerns with cease notification and offer of on-campus support services
- Mandatory meeting with the Executive Director of Student Services
- Recommendation of an interim suspension pending resolution of the concern
- Referral to Student Conduct Office

Depending on the circumstances, students who fail to comply with the dispositions of the BIT may be referred to the Student Conduct Office for disciplinary action.

Never promise confidentiality when discussing or reporting behavior or concern.

Addressing Disruptive Classroom Behaviors

Disruptive behavior may persistently or grossly interfere with the academic learning environment, making it difficult for other students to learn and instructors to teach. The following guidelines are intended to assist instructors in dealing with these situations. They are not designed to provide classroom management information or tell instructors how to teach.

There are two fundamental principles to observe:

1. Students have the right to express opinions germane to the subject matter of a course.
2. Instructors have the right to guide classroom discussion and set reasonable limits on the classroom time available to students to express their opinions.

Remember: *Instructors are responsible for striking a balance between these principles. Common Disruptive Behavior*

Common Disruptive Behavior

Some examples of disruptive behavior are identified below. This is not a complete or exhaustive list, and other behaviors may be included:

- Persistent late arrival and/or early departure that disrupts the class
- Repeated cell phone use in class
- Talking out of place during class
- Loud and/or frequent interruption of class flow with inappropriate questions or remarks
- Persistent contact outside of class that hampers your ability to do normal work or assist other students
- Belligerent behavior once confronted
- Verbal and/or physical threats
- Threatening emails, letters, or voicemails
- Inappropriate contact at an individual's home
- Any behavior indicating a romantic or obsessive interest
- Distressing or disturbing behaviors

Step 1

State the problem and classroom expectations. Address the behavioral disruption outside of class.

Step 2

Sometimes, asking the student to leave class immediately may be necessary for that class period only. Instructors are advised to address behavior as soon as they find it disruptive and to document all meetings and conversations about the situation.

Step 3

Submit a BIT report.

Threatening Behavior

Any time a student's classroom behavior is threatening towards any person (including themselves), Campus Safety should be called immediately.

There may be situations outside the classroom where instructors feel threatened or uncomfortable with a student's behavior. Instructors should report these situations to Campus Safety so appropriate interventions can happen before the matter escalates.

In any of these circumstances, a BIT referral form should be submitted in addition to the actions above.

Removing a Student from the Classroom

If a student continues to be disruptive and does not stop when the instructor asks, the instructor should direct that student to leave the classroom. Complete a BIT form ASAP.

If the student refuses to leave, notify Campus Safety.

Verbal De-Escalation Strategies

Techniques to use to help calm down a student who may be angry or upset

Be in control of yourself.

1. Appear calm, centered, and self-assured even though you don't feel it. Relax facial muscles and look confident. Your anxiety can make the student feel anxious and unsafe, and that can escalate aggression.
2. Use a modulated, low monotonous tone of voice (our normal tendency is to have a high-pitched, tight voice when scared or nervous).
3. Do not be defensive—even if the comments or insults are directed at you, they are not about you. Do not defend yourself or anyone else from insults or misconceptions about their roles.
4. Be aware of any resources available for backup. Know that you have the choice to leave, tell the student to leave, or call Campus Safety should de-escalation not be effective.
5. Be respectful even when firmly setting limits or calling for help. The agitated individual is susceptible to feeling shamed and disrespected. We want him/her to know that showing us they must be respected is unnecessary. We automatically treat them with dignity and respect.

Your Physical Stance

Always be at the same eye level. Encourage the student to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, you stand up, also.

Allow extra physical space between you – about four times your distance. Anger and agitation fill the extra space between you and the student.

1. Do not stand in front of the student. Stand at an angle so you can sidestep away if needed.
2. Do not maintain constant eye contact. Allow the student to break his/her gaze and look away.
3. Do not point or shake your finger.
4. DO NOT smile. This could look like mockery or anxiety.
5. Do not touch – even if some touching is generally culturally appropriate and usual in your setting. Cognitive dysfunction in agitated people allows for easily misinterpreting physical contact as hostile or threatening.

6. Keep hands out of your pockets, up and available to protect yourself. It also demonstrates non-verbal ally, that you do not have a concealed weapon.
7. Do not argue or try to convince; give choices, i.e., empower.
8. Don't be defensive or judgmental.
9. Don't be parental; join the resistance: You have a right to feel angry.

De-Escalation Discussion

1. Remember that there is no content except trying to calmly bring the stimulation level down to baseline.
2. Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath; then talk. Speak calmly at an average volume.
3. DO NOT answer abusive questions (e.g., "Why are all professors ?) This question should get no response whatsoever.
4. Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but always respectful tone. Give choices where possible in which both alternatives are safe (e.g., Would you like to continue our meeting calmly, or would you prefer to stop now and come back tomorrow when things can be more relaxed?)
5. Empathize with feelings but not with the behavior (e.g., "I understand that you have every right to feel angry, but it is not okay for you to use abusive language.)
6. Do not solicit how a person is feeling or interpret feelings analytically.
7. Do not argue or try to convince.
8. Wherever possible, tap into the student's cognitive mode: DO NOT ask, "Tell me how you feel. But: Help me to understand what you are saying to me".
9. Suggest appropriate alternative behaviors, e.g., "Would you like to take a break and have some water?"
10. Give the consequences of inappropriate behavior without threats or anger.
11. Represent external controls as institutional rather than personal.
12. Trust your instincts. If you assess or feel that de-escalation is not working, STOP! You will know within 2 or 3 minutes if it's beginning to work. Tell the person to leave, escort them to the door, call for help or leave yourself and call Campus Safety or 911.