

# TODD: Who Should Be on the Team?

There are a number of departments that are represented on typical CARE teams. Each college and university must make a choice about those best suited to attend their team meetings. The Campus Safety and Security Project (2009) reports the most frequent members on a team include academic affairs, campus safety, counseling, campus police, health services and human resources. Eells and Rockland-Miller (2011) suggest teams include counseling, student conduct, campus safety, health services, residential life and academic affairs.

NABITA offers some important survey data from over the past decade to provide guidance in terms of team membership. In their public facing 2020 summary report *Data Matters: Use of the NABITA Survey Data to Inform BIT Practice*,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Joseph Allen outlines the historical data regarding membership. He references the infographic chart from the 2020 NABITA survey data overview included here.

The myth of Scylla and Charybdis from Greek mythology provides an interesting example of how to strike a balance on the team. Scylla was described as a six-headed sea monster and Charybdis as a devastating whirlpool. According to Homer, Odysseus had to choose between losing men to the hungry mouths of Scylla or the entire ship to the whirlpool of Charybdis. Teams have a similar choice. Have a small team of three to four people and the team lacks



the information it needs to accurately assess violence and risk. Have a large team of ten to twelve, and team members are less likely to share important private information out of fear “it will get all around campus.” Finding that ideal team membership

## Most Common Core Members



*NABITA 2020 Survey Overview Infographic on Core Members<sup>2</sup>*

size that keeps it small enough for privacy but large enough to perform functionally can be a challenge.

Edward Hall, a psychoanalyst and anthropologist, suggests 8–12 as an ideal range. He writes, “This ideal size is between eight and twelve individuals. This is natural, because man evolved as a primate while living in small groups... Eight to 12 persons can know each other well enough to maximize their talents” (p. 203).<sup>3</sup>

The background experience of the team’s membership has an impact on the team’s function and practice. Some teams become more narrowly defined on law enforcement and police response, others on mental health risk, and others on internal conduct/discipline. Regardless of the background of the team members, collaboration must be nurtured among law enforcement, mental health and conduct/discipline. This creates opportunities for departments to work together and reduce isolated communications.

Diversity is another key factor related to team construction. Given the team’s role of gathering information from the community and analyzing that information to drive the interventions, the more diverse the membership,

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the more the team will be able to take into account various community member's perspectives, develop a fuller analysis and offer culturally competent interventions. When considering the diversity of team membership, consider the following areas:

- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Race and ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Political affiliation
- Religious beliefs
- Physical and mental disability
- Generation
- Immigrant/national
- Indigenous people

Another central point on team membership is the importance of having decision makers on the team, those with the power and ability to make immediate changes, activate systems and have access to budget money. Equally important, however, is developing an inclusive team membership that includes people who know the community well. Having power and authority without knowledge or connection to the community creates a team that looks good on the outside but is ineffective in their information gathering and interventions. A team with only members who are very knowledgeable and tied to the community but lack the power to take action is a team that is frequently frustrated. The team chair should ensure the team membership has the right balance of leadership and power along with front-line connections and community buy-in.



#### Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.nabita.org/blog/data-matters/>
- 2 <https://library.nchemr.org/library/nabita-library/21673NABITA%202020%20Survey%20Data%20Infographic.pdf>
- 3 Hall, E. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books.