NSU Behavior Intervention Team

Protocols and Procedures Manual

NORTHWESTERN STATE

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

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Introduction

College life is a time of change, growth, and transition, that can sometimes be difficult to navigate.

Northwestern State University (NSU) has an inherent interest in developing policies to preserve and enhance the University's ability to function effectively and efficiently as an academic institution. These policies entail recognition of both rights and responsibilities for all members of the University community. The purpose of the Northwestern State University, multi-disciplinary Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) is to detect early indicators of potential disruptive conduct, self-harm, and violence to others (https://www.nabita.org/). The NSU BIT provides early assessment and referral when an individual's behavior is identified as concerning, risky, or potentially harmful to self, others, or the campus community. The BIT reviews individual cases and recommends an appropriate response.

NSU is committed to providing a campus environment conducive to students to develop their full potential. There may be times when the university is required to respond to a person of concern. Through development of the Behavior Intervention Team (BIT), the University has created a mechanism to identify students in distress. This mechanism will initiate support and safety interventions, which will provide the student with the greatest chance of success and the university community the greatest level of protection.

This document will outline the University's BIT procedures, which do not replace existing academic or student policy and procedures, nor does it supersede existing local, state and/ or federal laws. Except where otherwise noted, the procedures in this directive apply to all students, faculty, and staff. The University may add, revoke, or modify these procedures to best meet the needs of each individual situation. Circumstances may dictate or necessitate procedural changes in policy implementation or enforcement that are not part of this policy, but this document will be continuously updated to best reflect the operating procedures of the University and the BIT.

Mission Statement

The mission of the NSU BIT is to provide a program for identification, intervention, and response to person(s) of concern while balancing the needs of the individual, with those of the safety of the individual and the university community. The BIT evaluates the behavior of students, faculty, and staff whose conduct patterns have raised concern about their well-being; centralizes communication to gain a more complete understanding of the whole individual; and develops a collaborative outreach plan with campus and community resources to address identified risks.

Definitions

Disruptive Behavior: Refers to actions or conduct by an individual that interferes with the normal functioning of the educational environment.

Person of Concern (PoC): Any person other than a student whose behavior, mental health, or wellbeing may pose a risk to their own safety, the safety of others, or the overall learning environment.

Student of Concern (SoC): A student whose behavior, mental health, or wellbeing may pose a risk to their own safety, the safety of others, or the overall learning environment.

Target(s): A person, object, place, or institution that is the focus of an attack or abuse.

Threat: Any verbal, written, or behavioral expression indicating potential harm to oneself, others or the community. This can include threats of violence, self-harm, institutional abuse, or other actions that may cause fear, risk to safety, or negative impacts to institutional missions or resources.

BIT Responsibilities

The team investigates and evaluates information of threats and disruptive behaviors to the University community and provides insight and recommendations to University administration. Primary duties and responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Maintaining a reporting mechanism that allows the University community to easily and confidentially report behaviors of concern.

- Monitoring recommendations and providing a systematic response to disruptions, threats, or harmful behaviors to the University community.

- Educating the University community of the availability of resources and reporting.

The team has the authority to receive a BIT report and take appropriate action.

BIT Membership

Team Membership Description

Team membership is based on the position and not the individual. The team is comprised of professionally trained, multi-disciplinary members. Depending upon the situation, the team may also consult with other individuals with the purpose of obtaining additional information regarding the investigation.

Team Members

The core team is composed of the following areas:

Core Behavior Intervention Team

- Student Affairs
- Residential Housing
- Title IX
- Human Resources
- Student Conduct
- University Safety
- Health Services
- Counseling
- NSU Police Department
- Accessibility and Disability Support
- Academic Affairs

BIT Meetings

- Meetings are held bi-weekly.

- Any team member may request an emergency meeting when a potential threat is reported.

- Team Members discuss existing and new cases during meetings.

- Verbal and written communication involving the Person of Concern/Student of Concern among team members is confidential to the greatest extent possible.

Meetings will include the following:

1. Brief existing cases.

2. Review relevant documentation including student interviews, faculty/staff information and other information related to the case.

3. Cases are evaluated using an assessment tool and/or a violence risk assessment rubric coupled with an investigation to classify the threat or disruptive behavior of the PoC and the risk to themselves or others. Intervention strategies are evaluated and recommended for each case. Recommendations are approved by a team vote.

4. Review relevant documentation on reports received since the last meeting.

5. Document meeting minutes and update PoC digital files.

BIT Liaisons

Campus Living Villages, NSU Army ROTC, Athletics, and others as deemed necessary.

Training

Training for the team may include, but is not limited to threat assessment, legal issues, insights into various professional approaches and perspectives, risk management, documentation, and other policies and procedures.

Expectations

All members are expected to:

- Attend scheduled meetings.

- Review current cases prior to attending.

- Report and share appropriate information.

- Identify additional outreach and support for PoC and affected University Community members.

- Maintain impartiality and confidentiality.

Northwestern State University Reporting Form

Threat Assessment concerns can be reported at:

https://my.nsula.edu/local/pages/?id=1.

For emergencies or immediate threats to safety contact University Police at

(318) 357-5431.

When to Refer:

- If efforts to manage a significant behavioral issue have not resolved the problem.

- If you are concerned about the welfare of a student(s), yourself, or the University community.

- If a student asks for help in dealing with personal issues that are outside your role as a faculty/staff member; and/or

- If you have referred the student for assistance in the past and there seems to be no improvement or behavior seems to be worsening.

Records

Records created by the team are maintained in electronic format and overseen by the Vice President for the Student Experience. Records related to individual students are considered "educational records'' and as such are protected in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Procedure

The team will conduct an investigative and cautious assessment based upon facts utilizing an integrated team approach to determine if an individual poses a threat to self or to the University community. If a threat presents an extreme or severe risk, law enforcement is notified immediately. If the concern is an elevated risk, the Vice President for the Student Experience or an appropriate team member(s) may seek out the individual immediately to confirm safety. In less urgent situations, a staff member will follow-up with the individual and see how the University can best support them. Each situation is different, dynamic, and requires a unique approach.

Investigation

Information is gathered from the referral sources as well as other parties involved. Decisions on who to contact are made on a case-by-case basis. The information gathered is used to make decisions regarding the health, safety, and the overall well-being of the person(s) of concern and the University community. In urgent or emergency situations, outreach may include the following: locating the individual on campus, re-questing a welfare check from their local police department, Campus Police, Housing, or, with approval of the Dean of Students, contacting the student's family or guardian.

Multiple sources of information may be consulted to learn about the Person of Concerns (PoC) behavior, interests, and state of mind at various points in time. When necessary, an interview of the PoC may be conducted by team members. Psychological assessments may be conducted by the University Counseling Center or other professional consultants.

Outreach to person(s) of concern:

Outreach efforts include but are not limited to:

- Email(s)
- Phone call(s)
- In person contact at residence/classroom
- Activities, clubs, and public areas where PoC in known to frequent

- Wellness Check

- Reporting Person follow up

- Guardian contact

Should outreach be unsuccessful, local law enforcement may be notified to assist in locating the Person of Concern.

Outreach/Communication to Reporter

- Acknowledge receipt and gather more information from the reporter.

- After contact with the PoC, the reporter may be notified that support has been provided while maintaining PoC privacy.

Outreach to Faculty/Staff

- During the investigation of a report, faculty/staff may be contacted for additional information such as grades or attendance as well as any issues that may have arisen in classes or while meeting with the PoC.

- Additionally, after the evaluation process, faculty/staff may be contacted regarding supportive measures needed in class or on campus.

Intervention Strategies

The team may make recommendations including, but not limited to the following:

Referral to University and/or Community Resources - The team may refer the student to the University Counseling Center and/or University Health Services for intervention.

Voluntary Withdrawal from Classes – Based on discussion with team members, the student may choose to voluntarily withdraw from the University. This should be decided by consulting with the University Registrar's Office.

Voluntary withdrawal during an investigation will not affect the investigative process. If a student withdraws during an investigation, transcription notations will remain until the process is complete.

Recommendations to the Disciplinary Process – The team will make a recommendation to the Director of Accountability and Student Conduct or a designee when it is determined that the student behavior may be in violation of the *Student Code of Conduct*. For University employees, disciplinary recommendations will be forwarded to the Human Resources Director.

Recommendations will be shared with the appropriate offices. BIT recommendations are not appealable. Disciplinary actions may be appealed through the sanctioning offices.

Follow-Up and Monitoring - In addition to specific intervention strategies described previously, the team will determine a plan for follow-up monitoring. This may include checking with the affected individuals regarding PoC behavior and periodic meetings with the PoC.

Emergency Removal from the University Setting

Target Protection

In the interest of protecting targets, the University may provide resources and reasonable accommodation. The team will support, advise and warn potential affected parties of dangers.

Outreach

It is the responsibility of the BIT to inform and educate the University community about the purpose of intervention, the procedure for filing a report, and how to contact team members.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - See Something, Say Something

If you see something that concerns you, please say something by alerting the NSU BIT. The BIT is a resource to help in a range of situations. Concerns could range from missing classes to a more urgent concern of harm to self or others.

The BIT does not respond directly to emergencies. If it is an emergency, call (318) 357-5431 immediately.

Let us all care for one another. If you are concerned about a university community member, we hope you will let us know.

If you report a concern, please be prepared to share:

- Your contact information will be optional.
- Name/any known information about the person you are referring, including SID number.
- Summary of the observed behavior or concern, including when and where it occurred. Be specific, objective, and descriptive; omitting any assumptions or bias.
- Any attempts to intervene, manage, or address the behavior.
- Other information you believe may be important.
- You can make an anonymous report, however, the response may be limited.

Appendix B - Referrals & BIT FAQS

What do I do if I know a student who I feel should be referred to the Behavior Intervention Team?

- If you feel there is an immediate threat, call 911, University Police at (318) 357-5431 or Natchitoches Police at (318) 352-8101.

- To make a referral, you can visit: https://my.nsula.edu/local/pages/?id=1 or contact the Dean of Students Office (318) 357-5285. You will be asked for basic information about the student and a description of the incident or behaviors that prompted the referral.

- You are the NSU BIT team's best resource because you are familiar with the student.   If you are comfortable doing so, tell the student that you are concerned and ask if the
student is OK. In many cases, students will indicate that they could use some help and you can refer them.

Who can make a referral to the BIT?

Anyone who feels a student's or faculty/staff member's well-being, or success is at risk can make a referral; including students, parents, faculty/staff, and community members.

What happens after I make the referral?

If the concern is urgent the Dean of Student's or the BIT Coordinator may seek out the student immediately to confirm safety. In less urgent situations, a staff member will follow up with
the student and see how we can best support them. Each situation is different and requires a unique approach.

Will I be updated about the BIT's response after making a referral?

We are limited in what we can share with you after we reach out to a student, as it is important to us that we maintain the student's privacy. However, we will confirm receipt of the referral and confirm that we will reach out to the student to offer assistance.

What happens to the student under the BIT?

If the BIT determines a student is appropriate for monitoring, the student will be added to a list of students discussed at each BIT meeting. A course of action is outlined and then reviewed during the subsequent meeting. Usually, a team member will be responsible for contacting the student to initiate an appropriate response.

Will students be disciplined?

The BIT's mission is to support the health, well-being, and safety of the Northwestern State University campus community by coordinating information and developing support plans for students of concern. It does not address disciplinary issues or hand out sanctions. The BIT will inform the administration of the threat level that the team has established. It will be at the discretion of the administration to apply sanctions or emergency removals.

How do I know if it is a BIT issue or if it is more appropriately handled by other campus resources?

You do not have to make this determination; the BIT will do it for you. The most critical step is that you report it. If another campus resource is more appropriate, the BIT will refer the student and handle the transfer of information.

What about confidentiality?

We cannot promise confidentiality when life safety is an issue, but we will make every effort to treat each case with discretion and privacy. School officials may be required to report situations involving threats to safety.
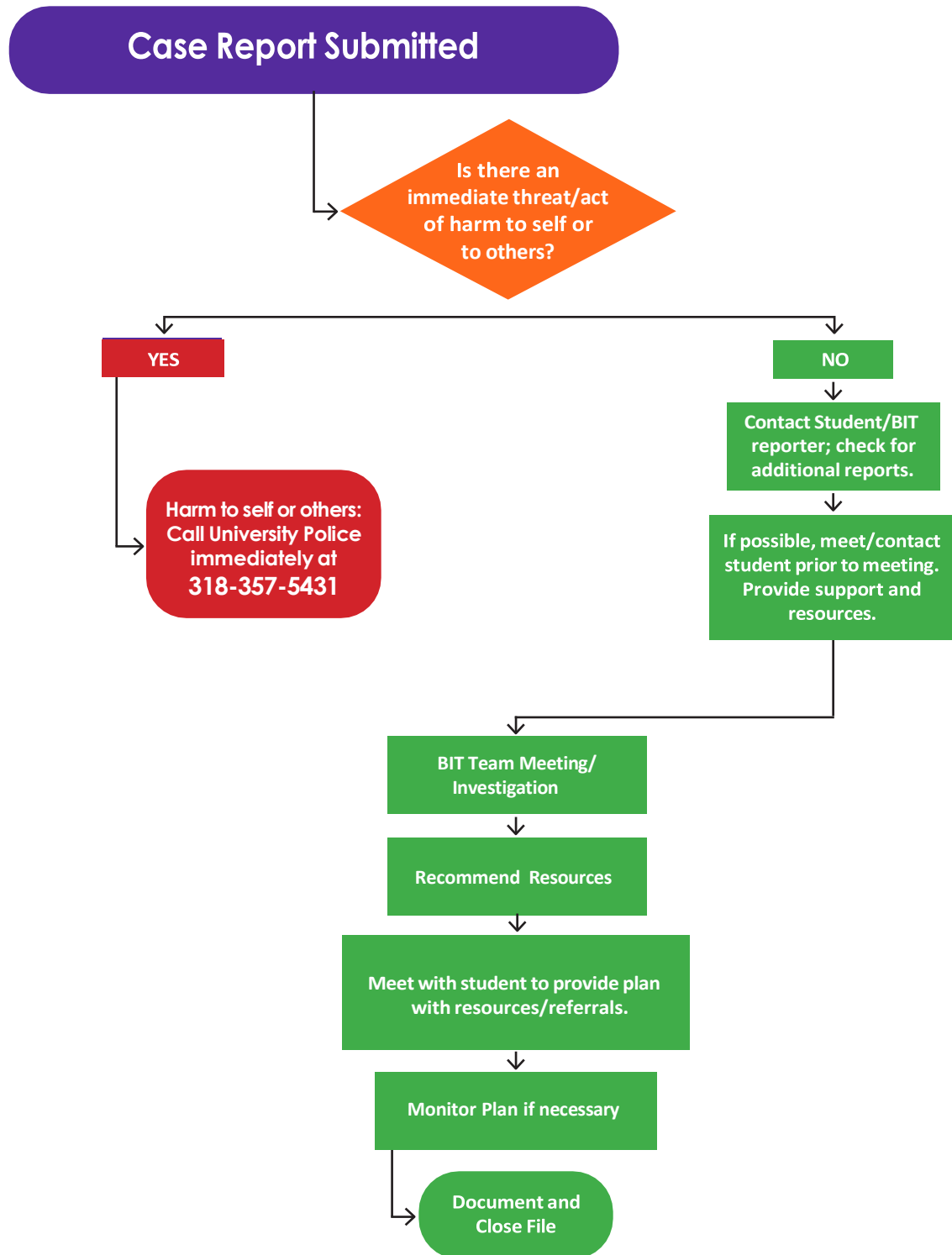
How can I help the student directly?

Your expression of concern may be a critical factor in supporting a student's academic and emotional well-being. You don't need to play the role of a counselor, many times listening, expressing care, and offering resources to the student can go a long way. When speaking with a student you are concerned for, we recommend the following strategies:

- Privately address your concerns in a quiet space.

- Be direct and specific about your concerns in non-judgmental and caring terms. For example, "You seem more stressed than normal, and I'm concerned about you. Do you want to talk to me about what is going on?"

- Listen attentively to the student's response and encourage them to talk (e.g ., "Tell me more about that.")

- Ask the student what they think would help. Encourage positive action by helping the student generate coping strategies.

- If you are concerned about suicide, ask directly if the student is thinking about suicide.

- If the student is at imminent risk for harm to self or others, call 911 or take the student to the nearest emergency room.

- Be aware of campus resources, including the University Counseling Center and the Dean of Students Office, and refer to appropriate service. Offer to assist the person in making an appointment or walk to the appropriate office. If you don't know the best resource to refer a student to, email deanofstudents@nsula.edu for suggestions.

- Follow up and provide support while setting boundaries. Know others are available to help.

Appendix C – Behavior Intervention Team

BIT Flowchart

Case Report Submitted

Is there an immediate threat/act of harm to self or to others?

YES

NO

Harm to self or others: Call University Police immediately at 318-357-5431

Contact Student/BIT reporter; check for additional reports.

If possible, meet/contact student prior to meeting. Provide support and resources.

BIT Team Meeting/ Investigation

Recommend Resources

Meet with student to provide plan with resources/referrals.

Monitor Plan if necessary

Document and Close File

Appendix D - Red Flags, Warning Signs, & Indicators

By Roger Depue, Ph.D.

Virginia.gov (2008). Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel, Appendix M. Retrieved on May 15, 2008, from https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/prevail/docs/VTReviewPanelReport.pdf.

Experts who evaluate possible indicators that an individual is at risk of harming himself or others know to seek out many sources for clues, certain red flags that merit attention. A single warning sign by itself usually does not warrant overt action by a threat assessment specialist. It should, however, attract the attention of an assessor who has been sensitized to look for other possible warning signs. If additional warning signs are present, then more fact-finding is warranted to determine if there is a likelihood of danger. Some warning signs carry more weight than others. For instance, a fascination with, and possession of, firearms are more significant than being a loner, because possession of firearms gives one the capacity to carry out an attack. But if a person simply possesses firearms and has no other warning signs, it is unlikely that he represents a significant risk of danger.

When a cluster of indicators is present then the risk becomes more serious. Thus, a person who possesses firearms, is a loner, shows an interest in past shooting situations, writes stories about homicide and suicide, exhibits abnormal behavior, has talked about retribution against others, has a history of mental illness and refuses counseling, would obviously be considered a significant risk of becoming dangerous to himself or others. A school threat assessment team upon learning about such a list of warning signs would be in a position to take immediate action including:

- Talking to the student and developing a treatment plan with conditions for remaining in school

- Calling parents or guardians

- Requesting permission to receive medical and education records

- Checking with law enforcement to ascertain whether there have been any interactions with police

- Talking with roommates and faculty

- Suspending the student until the student has been treated and doctors indicate the student is not a safety risk

Following are some warning signs (indicators and red flags) associated with school shootings in the United States. Schools, places of employment, and other entities that are creating a threat assessment capability may want to be aware of these red flags:

Violent fantasy content

- Writings (Stories, essays, compositions)
- Drawings (Artwork depicting violence)
- Reading and viewing materials (Preference for books, magazines, television, video tapes and discs, movies, music, websites, and chat rooms with violent themes and degrading subject matter), and role-playing acts of violence and degradation.

Anger problems

- Difficulty controlling anger
- Loss of temper
- Impulsivity
- Making threats

Fascination with weapons and accouterments

- Especially those designed and most often used to kill people (such as machine guns, semi-automatic pistols, snub nose revolvers, stilettos, bayonets, daggers, brass knuckles, special ammunition and explosives).

Boasting and practicing of fighting and combat proficiency

- Military and sharpshooter training, martial arts, use of garrotes, and knife fighting.

Loner

- Isolated and socially withdrawn, misfit, prefers own company to the company of others.
- Suicidal ideation - depressed and expresses hopelessness and despair,
- Reveals suicidal preparatory behavior. [See note below by Dr. Cheryl Yatsko]

Homicidal Ideation

- Expresses contempt for other(s)
- Makes comments and/or gestures indicating violent aggression.

Stalking

- Follows, harasses, surveils, attempts to contact regardless of the victim's expressed annoyance and demands to cease and desist.

Non-compliance and disciplinary problems

- Refusal to abide by written and/or verbal rules.
- Imitation of other murderers - Appearances, dress, grooming, possessions like those of violent shooters in past episodes (e.g., long black coats) .

Interest in previous shooting situations

- Drawn toward media, books, entertainment, conversations dealing with past murders.

Victim/Martyr self-concept

- Fantasy that someday he will represent the oppressed and wreak vengeance on the oppressors.

Strangeness and aberrant behavior

- Actions and words that cause people around him to become fearful and suspicious.

Paranoia

- Belief that he is being singled out for unfair treatment and/or abuse, feeling persecuted.

Violence and cruelty

- A history of using violence to solve problems (fighting, hitting, etc.), abusing animals or weaker individuals.

Inappropriate affect

- Enjoying cruel behavior and/or being able to view cruelty without being disturbed

Acting out

- Expressing disproportionate anger or humor in situations not warranting it, attacking surrogate targets.

Police contact

- A history of contact with police for anger, stalking, disorderly conduct.
- Past temporary restraining orders (or similar court orders).
- A jail/prison record for aggressive crimes.

Mental health history related to dangerousness.

- A history of referral or commitments to mental health facilities for aggressive/destructive behavior.

Expressionless face/anhedonia

- An inability to express and/or experience joy and pleasure.

Unusual interest in police, military, terrorist activities

- Vehicles resembling police cars, military vehicles, surveillance equipment, handcuffs, weapons, clothing (camouflage, ski masks, etc.). Use of alcohol/drugs.
- Alcohol/drugs are used to reduce inhibitions so that aggressive behaviors are more easily expressed.

Note: Additional information on suicidal ideation provided by Dr. Cheryl Yatsko, Columbus State University, June 4, 2008.

Suicidal Ideation

- Depressed and expresses helplessness, hopelessness, and worthlessness.
- Talking about death.
- Talking about suicide or making statements like "everybody would be better off without me."

- Acquiring the means (e.g., buying a gun).
- Giving away possessions.
- Saying goodbye.

Appendix E – Resignation/Cancellation from the University

(The information below is for reference only. Please contact the Registrar's Office at registrar@nsula.edu.)

At some time, it may be necessary for a student to leave school. If this should occur, the student should not leave without completing an official resignation/cancellation form that will protect his or her academic standing. Please read carefully:

1 . A student is responsible for canceling his/her registration before the first day of classes for a fall/spring term or no later than the second-class day of a summer session if proper financial arrangements have not been made.

2 . A student who fails to cancel his/her registration according to refund schedule will be obligated to pay for those classes in accordance with the current refund policy. Classes will NOT be dropped automatically due to non-payment of tuition and fees or non- attendance of classes.

3 . Students who drop all courses in which they are registered must officially resign from the University. Students cannot drop their last class via NSUConnect.

4 . Students who want to cancel their registration or resign from the University may initiate the resignation/cancellation process in the Office of the Registrar or go to the University Registrar's Office Web page at https://www.nsula.edu/registrar/ to download a copy of the **Resignation/Cancellation Form**. Students must print, complete, sign, date, and fax the completed form to the Office of the Registrar at (318) 357-5823 or scan the completed form and e-mail it as a PDF attachment to registrar@nsula.edu.

5 . Students unable to come to campus and/or without Internet access may fax a letter of resignation/cancellation to the University Registrar's Office at (318) 357-5823.

6 . A student may resign from the institution with grades of "W" prior to a date specified in the official University academic calendar.

7 . Students who leave the University without completing an official resignation/cancellation form may have grades of "F" or "WN" recorded in all courses in which they are registered and will be charged all fees associated with their registration.

Appendix F - References & Resources

Website Pages

References and Resources

We would like to express our appreciation to Nicholls State University for sharing their Colonel Care Policy which we utilized as a framework in establishing our own: https://www.nicholls.edu/case-management/colonel-care/

D-Prep Safety Division: https://www.dprepsafety.com/

NaBita: The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association is an organization for the support and professional development of behavioral intervention team members: https://nabita.org/

Texas A & M University Central Texas BIT Policies and Procedure Manual: https://www.tamuct.edu/index.html

Lake Land College Behavioral Intervention and Violence Prevention Plan/Team Handbook: https://www.lakelandcollege.edu/behavioral-intervention/

Community College of Denver Care Team manual: https://www.ccd.edu/download/file/fid/6109

The NCHERM Group is the umbrella for six linked organizations which serve to advance holistic, proactive prevention and risk management within K-12 schools and on college and university campuses:

https://www.ncherm.org

Memo to File: Determination of No Emergency Removal

MEMO

Date: [--------]

From: [Full name of staff member drafting

Memo] Respondent Name: [   ]

Case #: [--------]

RE: Determination of No Emergency Removal

Under federal law and per Northwestern State University's policy, if the alleged misconduct falls within the jurisdiction of the 2020 Title IX Regulations, a full or partial emergency removal from any educational program or activity requires the institution to undertake an individualized safety and risk analysis to determine whether the Respondent poses an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of sexual harassment This memo documents the relevant information currently known and the associated determination by the Title IX Coordinator.

On [Date], [explain how institution became aware of the allegations against the Respondent, and to whom and via what medium the concerns/allegations were reported] It was alleged that [provide a brief description of the allegations and any relevant context, specifically that which relates to ongoing or potential risk to the community].

[Provide a rationale for why, upon initial assessment, a violence risk assessment was deemed necessary.]

On [Date], a Violence Risk Assessment (VRA) was conducted by the NSU Behavior Intervention Team The VRA's conclusions and associated rationales, dated 00/00/0000 are as follows, in relevant part:

[Quote the relevant portions of the VRA results, including the conclusions drawn and their supporting rationales.]

After review of all the known circumstances and currently available information, including the VRA report, it is the determination of the BIT, that, at this time, an Emergency Removal is not appropriate.

[Provide a detailed rationale explaining why the results of the VRA, taken in light of all the known circumstances, support the determination that an emergency removal would not be appropriate.]

[Include information about risk mitigation steps and supportive measures that will be implemented in lieu of the emergency removal.]

Notice of Emergency Removal (Student)

[Date]

Complainant: [Complainant Full Name]

Case Number: [Case Number] [Respondent

Full Name]

[Mailing Address and/or E-mail]

[Mode of Delivery (e.g., E-mail, hand delivery etc.)]

Dear [Respondent First Name]:

On [Date], the [Recipient] notified you that it was opening an investigation under the [Policy].

In response to the formal complaint, the Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) at Northwestern State University has undertaken an individualized safety and risk analysis and you were notified on [Date] that the [College/University] was requiring you to participate in a violence risk assessment. As a result of a review of the provider's documentation and recommendations resulting from the violence risk assessment OR your non-compliance with the required violence risk assessment OR the safety and risk analysis, the University has determined that you pose an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of a student or other individual arising from the allegations in the formal complaint. The specific reasons for the decision are: [Describe why the individual is an immediate threat].

Accordingly, you are removed from the University's [specify education program and/or activities] on an emergency basis. You may not participate in classes (remotely or in person) or any other school-sponsored events or activities, reside in [Recipient's] housing facilities, etc. until after you are notified otherwise.

This emergency removal is effective immediately. Please contact [Administrator Full Name], [Administrator Title] at [Phone] or [E-mail] to make arrangements to surrender your residence hall access key(s)/cards, etc. If you are alleged to be non-compliant with the terms of the emergency removal, you are subject to disciplinary action under the [Policy].

You can challenge this emergency removal decision under [Policy] by submitting an appeal in writing to the Dean of Students, within (2) two business days within (2) two business days of the date of this letter. The Complainant is also receiving a copy of this notice.

Sincerely,

[Full Name]

[Title]

Cc: File, Complainant, [BIT Chair, Campus Police/Safety, etc.

nsula.edu