



Team Intervention

All of the intervention concepts are best utilized when a team of professionals intervenes. The concept of team intervention is not new. However, when it comes to intervening with the potentially violent person, the team concept tends to break down. Example: Security personnel often feel as if a crisis gets “dumped into their laps” only after other staff have mishandled the onset of the crisis and now “brute force” is required to manage the situation. On the other hand, some staff feel security tends to intervene with too much of a heavy-handed approach.

This breakdown in teamwork occurs because there is frequently a fundamental lack of communication regarding exactly what a crisis intervention team is supposed to do and who should be involved in the team. Good teamwork is a product of two ingredients: communication and experience. The questions “Who should be on an intervention team?” and “What should the team do?” need to be answered before one can expect cohesive team intervention.

Why Team Intervention?

It is always advisable to intervene as a team of two or more unless the situation dictates or demands solo intervention. If you are alone on a unit and an individual breaks a glass and threatens suicide, you may feel it is, in your best professional judgment, a wise decision not to leave the scene to obtain assistance. Under all other circumstances, it is best to intervene as a team.

The first and foremost reason is that team intervention is much safer for all involved. Even police officers, when intervening in a domestic dispute, make every effort to intervene with a backup officer present. When dealing with volatile people, you can never tell how far the situation will escalate, and solo intervention can present a danger to you. Furthermore, it can be dangerous to the individual as well. If the person physically acts out toward you and you are alone in your efforts to manage his behavior, you may revert to self-defensive instincts. This is not uncommon, and often is the cause of injury to the acting out individual.

Overall, team intervention is more professional. Solo interventions have the tendency to precipitate a confrontive atmosphere. Although you may have good intentions, the person may perceive the situation as a “one-on-one, you against me” scenario. With a team, you are more likely to give the impression that “we are here to help you and keep you safe,” as opposed to “I am here to confront you.”

Finally, team intervention is safer from a legal standpoint. If you intervene by yourself and an abuse charge is filed, it is your word against the other person’s regarding what happened during the intervention. Team intervention gives you added protection in a court of law due to the fact that witnesses can testify as to what actually occurred.



Group Vs. Team Characteristics

Groups

- Individual accountability
- Results are produced by individual efforts
- Individual purposes
- Individual results and rewards
- Limited information
- Manager controlled
- Function-driven
- Narrow understanding of specific tasks
- Single-skilled workers

Teams

- Individual and team accountability
- Members work together to produce results
- Team purposes
- Shared resources, results, and rewards
- Shared information
- Team controlled
- Process-driven
- Broad understanding of overall tasks
- Multi-skilled members



Group Vs. Team Behaviors

Groups

- “I do my job, you do yours.”
- Individuals grouped together working on separate goals
- Shared steps repeated by each member at different times
- “You’ll get it when it’s done!”
- Communication when a problem arises
- Individual task-specific knowledge
- Fear of losing “face” from exposing weaknesses
- Loudest voice get his/her way.
- Boss is always right.
- “That’s not my fault.”

Teams

- “How are our responsibilities interconnected?”
- Individuals working together toward a common goal.
- Shared steps experienced simultaneously by all members.
- Members give/get advance notice of requirements.
- Continual communication to anticipate and/or avoid problems.
- Surface understanding of team responsibilities.
- Welcome suggestions and constructive criticism from team.
- All members have equal chance to be heard/
- No one is always right.
- “What can we do to fix it?”



Making Your Team Successful

Work through some of these exercises to make your team more successful:

- Define the team's purpose (main objective and/or reason for existence). This can be accomplished by generating a mission statement.
- Review the team's actions against its purpose: "How are we doing in achieving our purpose?"
- Define current work norms and traditions and whether they support the team's purpose. Discuss how the team wants to work together in the future.
- On a scale of one to ten (with one being a disconnected group of individuals and ten being a true team) determine where the team is in its stage of development. Identify barriers preventing development and solutions to removing those barriers.
- Define roles of team members. If definitions already exist, make sure that they are accurate and current. Identify where roles overlap and/or are dependent on other roles.
- Evaluate the team's performance against prior goals, objectives, or budgets. Celebrate successes, but address problem areas.
- Design a process for feedback from both internal and external customers. Decide how to use feedback for continuous improvement.
- Participate in team learning activities (conflict management, problem solving, team dynamics, etc.).