



Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention: Observable Behaviors

Although there is no single profile for those who have committed acts of targeted violence, the following behaviors are commonly observed in both conducted and thwarted cases:

Behavior	Description of Behavior
Deepening depression/despair	Communications signaling changed or increased desperation or distress, evidenced by fixated thought patterns of death, inability to regulate emotions, and/or lack of positive expression.
Changes in behavior	Unusual/unexplained deviation from an individual's prior behavior pattern.
Preparatory behavior	Attempt to gain access or proximity to a target; refers to the type, frequency, and intensity of an individual's attempts to be physically close to the target; could include unusual travel or significant changes in travel patterns.
Interest in past attacks	Unusual interest in previous attacks, attackers, or violent extremists, such as emulating the actions and statements of former attackers.
Fixation	Unusual, extreme preoccupation with a person, place, belief, or cause to the point that an individual cannot be redirected to end the infatuation.
Unusual acquisition of weapons or weapons expertise	Collection or stockpiling of unusual amounts or types of weapons, tactical equipment, or destructive materials, including explosives and chemicals, as well as attempts to illegally gain access to these materials.
Novel violence/aggression	New or alarming acts of aggressive or violent behavior, such as domestic violence, animal cruelty, or harassment; this could also include new patterns of violent or aggressive behavior.
Expressed or implied intent to harm	Threats explicitly stated or communicated to commit an act of targeted violence made virtually, in-person, written, or verbally against a particular target.
Directly communicated threat	Communications—verbal, written, in-person, or virtual—that intentionally or unintentionally reveal insight into an individual's thinking, planning, or execution of an act to harm oneself or others; this could include ambiguous threats of violence.
End-of-life planning	Unusual or unexplained activities, behaviors, or communications indicating preparation for the end of life, including a manifesto.

As noted by the Department of Homeland Security, the behaviors and factors listed above include constitutionally protected activities and life circumstances that are experienced by many people who will never engage in violent activity. Each indicator listed may be, by itself, lawful conduct or behavior and may constitute the exercise of rights guaranteed by the US Constitution.