

Spotting Leakage

Schools, college campuses, and workplaces are meant to be vibrant environments where we learn, grow, and collaborate. Ensuring that everyone remains safe and secure is a shared responsibility. One of the most critical tools we have for preventing targeted violence is understanding the concept of "[Leakage](#)."

What is Leakage?

Leakage occurs when an individual intentionally or unintentionally signals their intent to harm others before an act of violence occurs. Research in threat assessment indicates that these warning signs are present in the majority of targeted violence cases. Often, it is friends, family, classmates, teachers, or coworkers who are the first to notice these concerning signs.

Recognizing these signals and knowing how to respond is not about promoting fear. It's about empowering our communities with knowledge and fostering a culture of care and safety.

What Can Leakage Look Like?

Leakage can be direct or indirect, and it can appear in many forms. It might be subtle or obvious, but it often represents a cry for help or a clear warning. Be aware of these potential signs in person or online:

- Social media posts, group chats, or blogs
- Emails, texts, or direct messages
- Classroom discussions, workplace conversations, or presentations
- Creative work like essays, journals, artwork, or videos
- Comments made to friends, peers, or colleagues

Specific behaviors of concern can include:

- **Vague or Direct Threats:** Phrases like "You'll see," "They'll be sorry," or mentions of plans.
- **Idolizing Past Attackers:** Expressing admiration or justification for individuals who have committed acts of mass violence.
- **Gear Posts:** Sharing images or videos of weapons, ammunition, or tactical equipment, especially in a concerning context.
- **Fixation:** An intense, obsessive focus on a grievance, person, group, or ideology, often accompanied by feelings of being wronged or persecuted.
- **Pathway Behavior:** Actively planning for an attack, such as scouting locations, researching methodologies, or acquiring means.
- **Identification:** Adopting the name, persona, or symbols of a past attacker or violent ideology.
- **Urgency or Last Resort:** Language that suggests a point of no return, such as "It has to be now," "No other choice," or "This is the only way."
- **Energy Burst:** A sudden, noticeable flurry of activity after a period of planning or depression (e.g., excessive posting, giving away possessions, or making final preparations).



What To Do If You See Something Concerning

Your awareness and courage can save lives. If something feels off, trust your instincts. You are not expected to be an investigator, but you are a vital part of the safety network.

1. **Do Not Ignore Your Instincts:** You do not need proof or certainty to act. If a behavior or communication makes you feel concerned or threatened, take it seriously.
2. **Do Not Confront the Individual:** For your safety and to avoid escalating the situation, do not directly challenge the person or warn them that you might report them.
3. **Preserve Evidence (If Safe to Do So):** Take screenshots, save emails, and note relevant details like usernames, dates, times, and specific quotes. This information is invaluable for those who will assess the situation.
4. **Report It Immediately:**
 - **In K-12 Schools:** Report to a teacher, school counselor, school resource officer (SRO), principal, or use the school's anonymous reporting system if available.
 - **On College Campuses:** Contact Campus Police/Security or your campus's Behavioral Intervention or Threat Assessment Team.
 - **In the Workplace:** Report to a supervisor, manager, Human Resources (HR), or your company's security team.
5. **Be Specific in Your Report:** Provide as much detail as possible, including:
 - **Who** is involved (the person of concern and any potential targets).
 - **What** you saw or heard (include exact quotes and descriptions).
 - **When** and **Where** it occurred.
 - **Why** it concerned you.
 - Mention any known access to weapons or prior concerning incidents.

A Final Note on Care and Community

Reporting concerning behavior is an act of compassion. It ensures that the individual of concern can be connected to appropriate resources, support, and intervention before they harm themselves or others. By speaking up, you are actively protecting your community and potentially helping someone in crisis get the help they need.

If you see something, say something. You have the power to help prevent a tragedy.