

Warning Signs for Potentially Violent Behavior

SAFETY TRAINING

This handout is intended to assist ecclesiastical leaders in determining whether individuals in their meetinghouses might become violent. “Persons typically do not just ‘snap’ but display indicators of potentially violent behavior over time. If these behaviors are recognized, they can often be managed and treated” (“Pathway to Violence,” Utah Department of Public Safety, sbi.utah.gov).

The list below was developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and adapted from the document “Pathway to Safety” from the Utah Department of Public Safety. (Note: this is not a comprehensive list, nor is it intended to diagnose violent tendencies.)

Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Individuals

- Unexplained increase in absenteeism; may include vague physical complaints
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
- Depression or withdrawal
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures
- Repeated violations of Church norms and standards
- Increase in severe mood swings
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Suicidal ideation; comments about “putting things in order”
- Behavior typical of paranoia, such as statements like “Everybody is against me”
- Increasing talk of problems at home
- Escalation of domestic problems at Sunday services
- Talk of severe financial problems
- Talk of previous incidents of violence
- Empathy with individuals committing violence
- Increase in unsolicited comments about firearms, other dangerous weapons, and violent crimes

*This information is provided by the Church Security Department. If you are dealing with a potentially violent individual, please call Church Security for assistance at **1-801-240-2661**.*