

Dementia Caregivers Across Six Utah Counties to Receive Support Through ADRC-Funded Project

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04/10/2026

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An estimated 110,000 Utahns provide informal care for a loved one with dementia, and the ongoing stress and uncertainty can often feel overwhelming, especially as caregivers navigate complex financial situations and struggle with emotional and mental health challenges—all while managing the day-to-day challenges of assisting their loved one.

Utah State University Extension is launching a newly expanded digital literacy pilot program to support dementia caregivers across the state.

“We know that caregivers are the backbone of our community, but they are often targets for fraud or suffer from isolation,” said Cara Murray, USU Extension assistant professor and project lead. “This program is about giving them the tools to feel safe, connected, and empowered.”

Supported by a research catalyst grant from the Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia Research Center (ADRC), a center within the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, the project aims to bridge the digital divide for aging adults and caregivers. While originally planned for four rural locations, the project has expanded its reach to six counties.

“The goal is to enhance the ability of caregivers to access, evaluate, and use digital tools that improve health outcomes and reduce isolation,” said Murray. “With the support of the ADRC, we are now able to implement this pilot class in Carbon, Box Elder, and Davis counties with in-person sessions, while also reaching Utah, Wasatch, and Summit counties through a new virtual hybrid

model developed in partnership with the Mountainland Association of Governments.”

The pilot curriculum addresses vulnerabilities often faced by older caregivers, such as financial fraud and social isolation. The topics covered in the four-week course are:

- Navigating telehealth platforms and health management apps.
- Using home monitoring tools to support independent living.
- Using digital tools to prioritize caregiver mental health.
- Protecting families from online scams and managing digital assets.

The project is part of the ADRC’s mission to fund impactful, community-based projects. By targeting unpaid caregivers—often family members in their late fifties or sixties—the pilot classes will gather essential data on how digital interventions can improve quality of life for those caring for loved ones with memory loss. Eventually this curriculum will be offered to caregivers throughout Utah.

Space is limited per location to ensure personalized instruction. Each participant will receive incentives in appreciation for their time and feedback, which will help shape the future of the program for all caregivers statewide. Classes by county:

Utah, Summit, and Wasatch counties (Virtual):

(Individuals interested in participating in these classes can sign up after the start date, so long as space is still available.)

Mondays, April 6, 13, 20, 27 at 11 a.m.

Participants should contact host Jared Hawkins at jared.hawkins@usu.edu to register.

Davis County (In Person):

This class will begin in May.

Central Davis Senior Activity Center

81 E. Center St., Kaysville

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Hosted by Emma Parkhurst

Register at tinyurl.com/usu-literacy

Carbon and Box Elder counties (In Person):

These classes will begin in May. To register for the Carbon County class, reach out to host Christina Pay, christina.pay@usu.edu. To register for the Box Elder County class, reach out to host Kristen Koci, kristen.koci@usu.edu.

Contact

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