

USU Extension Awarded Federal Grant for Youth Mental Health

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Utah State

University Extension in Davis County was recently awarded a \$315,700 federal grant to train adults so they can provide mental health support to youth through the Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) program. The grant comes from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The mission of SAMHSA is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. The Project AWARE-Community grant will be distributed over a three-year period.

Through the program, adults in Davis County will receive training to help them detect and respond to mental illness in local youth ages 12-18. The public education program introduces adult participants to the risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems and builds an understanding of the importance of early intervention.

According to Zuri Garcia, USU Extension assistant professor and project director, those being trained are introduced to local mental health resources, national organizations, support groups and online tools for mental health and addiction treatment and support.

"These resources empower community adults to recognize and help youth with mental health needs just like a person who is trained in First Aid and CPR does when the need arises," said Garcia. "Trained YMHFA 'first aiders' refer youth and their families to professionals. They do not diagnose or treat youth themselves."

Garcia said the grant aligns well with USU Extension's 4-H youth program.

"We are always looking for ways to serve our youth and meet county needs, and this grant will be a huge benefit to many youth in our community," she said.

Through the grant, programs and events will be implemented to reduce the stigma often associated with mental health concerns. The project is being advised by Davis HELPS, the local coalition addressing suicide prevention, Davis County's number one health priority for 2014 through 2018.

Isa Perry, Davis County Health Department community outreach planner, said it will be a huge benefit to the community to have Davis County receive additional resources to support these efforts.

"We have a goal to prevent and reduce suicide deaths and provide the community with resources to address mental health issues," she said. "A collaborative culture has fueled Davis County's success over the last couple of years in implementing a comprehensive suicide prevention plan. Many agencies and partners have strategically aligned to make a real impact. No one agency can address a complex issue like suicide alone."

Awareness programs and events will be posted throughout the year on the USU Extension Davis County website at extension.usu.edu/davis. For further information on the USU Extension Davis County Project AWARE grant, programs and services, contact Garcia at 435-374-8784 or zuri.garcia@usu.edu.

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