

USU Extension Receives Grant for Mental Health in Rural Communities

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Utah State University Extension recently partnered with 13 states and four territories on a Western Region Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Grant. As an outreach sub-awardee of the grant, USU Extension received \$200,000 to invest in pilot programs focused on mental health awareness and advocacy for farmers, ranchers and other isolated rural Utahns.

These programs will be created in partnership with USU's Center for Persons with Disabilities and Human Development and Family Services departments. Faculty and staff in these three USU departments will work together to create easily accessed course content specific to the issues faced by farmers, ranchers and rural Utahns.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) recently announced these grant investments as a way to support agricultural producers across the country.

"Federal investments in programs that help new farmers get into the business, support military veterans who are considering farming and ranching as a new career, and address serious stress-related mental health issues among farmers, are critical to ensuring our next generation of food producers are able to successfully meet the challenges facing agriculture," said Parag Chitnis, acting NIFA director.

USU Extension will focus on creating programs that are accessible, with both online and in-person trainings, and informative, filling the gap on mental health education for the rural population. In addition to this program, partnering

states will create additional resources and programs, including a FarmAid helpline, which will be similar to national suicide hotlines, but will include information and resources specific to farmers, ranchers and rural populations. It will also be the first time the hotline has hours meeting the needs of time zones in the Western United States.

"These programs will ensure that vulnerable agricultural producers and their families have more options for high-quality, affordable help close to home," said Tasha Killian, USU Extension assistant professor.

For more information about this farm project, visit; <https://farmstress.us/>. For more information about USU Extension programs, visit <https://extension.usu.edu/>.

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