

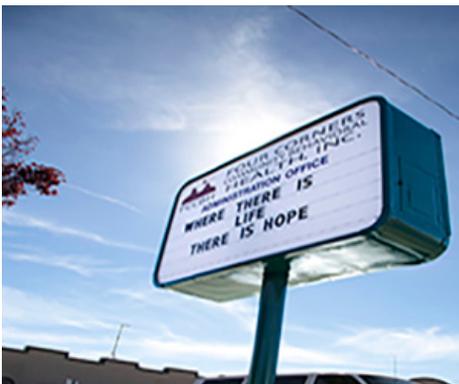
USU Extension Receives Opioid Prevention Grant from USDA

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Utah State University Extension recently received a grant for \$175,000 for opioid prevention, treatment and recovery opportunities under USDA's 2019 Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program. The DLT program helps rural communities use telecommunications to connect people and the world, overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density.

Twelve grants were awarded in 10 states, totaling \$2.75 million. The grants will support a wide range of services, including video conferencing programs, education and substance misuse treatment. Extension partnered with USU statewide campuses and Academic and Instructional Services to provide video conferencing infrastructure for



the project.

According to Maren Wright Voss, USU Extension professional practice assistant professor of health and wellness, the award couldn't come at a better time, as the state of Utah has been one of the hardest hit by opioid overdose deaths.

"To combat it, we need better treatment resources in our rural areas," she said. "The USDA funding will be used to enhance the equipment and broadcast curriculum for peer support specialist trainings in rural Utah. We are excited to partner with the USDA in supporting a critical treatment resource for those suffering from the opioid epidemic."

According to Sandra Sulzer, USU Extension health and wellness specialist, between 2000 and 2015, the state

saw a 400 percent increase in deaths resulting from the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs. Some counties, such as Carbon and Emery, have rates well above the state average, which puts them among the hardest hit in the nation.

"We are so pleased to partner with USU to improve rural access to specialized education with this grant," said Randy Parker, Utah State Director for USDA Rural Development and co-chair of Utah's Rural Opioid Work Group. "USU Extension is the state's premier organization reaching out to rural citizens on critical needs. Together we are investing in a brighter future for rural Utah."

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, and to find additional community resources in combatting the opioid epidemic, visit www.rd.usda.gov/ut.

For further information about how USU Extension is partnering with health departments, research experts, community coalitions and other key stakeholders to address Utah's health and wellness needs, visit extension.usu.edu/healthwellness/heart/.

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