

USU Extension Receives \$2.3 Million Grant to Reduce Opioid Harms

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Utah State University Extension recently received the Opioid Impacted Family Support Grant, a \$2.3 million award for peer support training and apprenticeships to help reduce opioid harms on Utah's impacted families.

The grant will help expand the Utah Peer Support workforce. Peers are trained professionals who have experience with substance use or mental health struggles either personally or within their families. Studies show that having a certified peer support specialist as part of the treatment team increases treatment retention, improves access to social supports and decreases arrests, hospitalizations and relapse.

The grant will train and support apprenticeships for 365 peer para-professionals over the next four years, ensuring there is a strong workforce to address substance use and opioid disorders in Utah.

"I'm heartened to see federal dollars awarded to such a worthy goal," said Maren Wright Voss, USU Extension professional practice assistant professor. "When I first met with people in recovery in my community, they told me we need more professionals with lived experience on our treatment teams. This funding is going to put that goal into action."

Two years ago, USU Extension made an investment in the Health Education, Advocacy, Research, and Teaching (HEART) Initiative to reduce opioid harms in Utah and

bring more health resources to Utah counties. The Opioid Impacted Family Support Grant is the newest in over \$4 million in funding that USU Extension and HEART faculty have helped bring to the state during that time.

For more information about how USU Extension and the HEART initiative are addressing the opioid crisis in Utah communities, visit <https://extension.usu.edu/HEART/>.

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