SAFE UT

FISCAL YEAR
2020-2021
ANNUAL
REPORT

SAFE UT

AVAILABLE 24/7 | 100% CONFIDENTIAL | ALWAYS FREE

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

SafeUT

The SafeUT smartphone app is a statewide service that provides real-time crisis intervention to Utah's students, parents, and educators at no cost. SafeUT was developed by the legislatively created SafeUT Commission, chaired by the Utah Attorney General's Office. SafeUT allows students in crisis to open a two-way messaging service with master's level counselors, call a certified crisis worker directly, or submit confidential tips to crisis counselors and school administrators regarding bullying, threats, violence, etc. The app is staffed by master's level trained crisis counselors at the Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI), formerly the University Neuropsychiatric Institute (UNI), 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Far More Than an App

SafeUT is far more than an app; it is a mental health system that acts to provide professional help for youth and young adults in crisis. Crisis help can be provided through texting, which factors into SafeUT's success with youth more comfortable texting than talking on a phone. Use is confidential, and crisis counselors do not inquire about identifying information except in emergency situations. SafeUT has been recognized nationwide for its effectiveness in saving lives and de-escalating potential school incidents. The Commission is currently working with several states to implement similar programs.

New Look, Same Friendly Face

After carefully listening to feedback from end-users, the SafeUT commission approved an updated look and feel for SafeUT, SafeUT-NG, and SafeUT Frontline. The new logo and brand is inviting and modern, reflecting our focus on school safety and providing emotional support to a wide range of users.

AWARDS

2021 Best of State Award
Best Web-based Community Resource

Exploring Solutions

Suicide is the leading cause of death for youth in the state of Utah. After studying the issue, the Utah Attorney General's Office and Senator Daniel Thatcher proposed legislation in 2014 to form a commission to explore solutions. The legislation passed and the commission was led by the Utah Attorney General's Office. In 2015, the School Safety and CrisisLine legislation (SB 175) sponsored by Sen. Thatcher and Rep. Steven Eliason passed the Utah State Legislature creating an active oversight commission chaired by the Utah Attorney General's Office and designating Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI), formerly the University Neuropsychiatric Institute (UNI), as the crisis services provider based on their excellence in crisis call support. The SafeUT app became available to middle and high schools in Utah in early 2016.

Development & Expansion

The SafeUT program was developed with funding from the State of Utah. The original SafeUT app was designed and donated by a private company. After seeing its success, the University of Utah redesigned the SafeUT app as a State of Utah owned application to ensure its future capabilities to respond to crisis.

In 2018, SafeUT expanded to Utah higher ed institutions and Utah technical colleges. In 2019, SafeUT further expanded services to the Utah National Guard.

In the summer of 2020, SafeUT extended services for Utah first responders in the form of SafeUT Frontline, which is available for law enforcement, fire/EMS, health care staff, and other frontline workers and their families.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Enrolled schools are listed within the SafeUT app and school administrators are trained to handle submitted tips received through the app. At the end of the 2020–2021 school year, **87.8% of all Utah K–12 schools and universities** (including public, private, and charter) have been enrolled in SafeUT. All tips submitted through the app are immediately reviewed by HMHI staff. Non-urgent tips are sent daily to the appropriate school administrators, and tips of a more threatening nature (including violence or planned school attacks) are triaged by crisis counselors who may involve law enforcement and administrators to quickly resolve the crisis. During the 2020–2021 school year, the SafeUT app received 256 threat tips, which included reports of violence, weapons, and planned school attacks.

850,790
STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO THE APP ACROSS UTAH

89.3%
OF DISTRICT

100%
OF HIGH SCHOOLS

100%
OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS

91.6%
OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

89.5%
OF CHARTER K-12

69.5%
OF HIGHER ED

13.6%
OF PRIVATE K-12

89.8% TOTAL STUDENT REACH
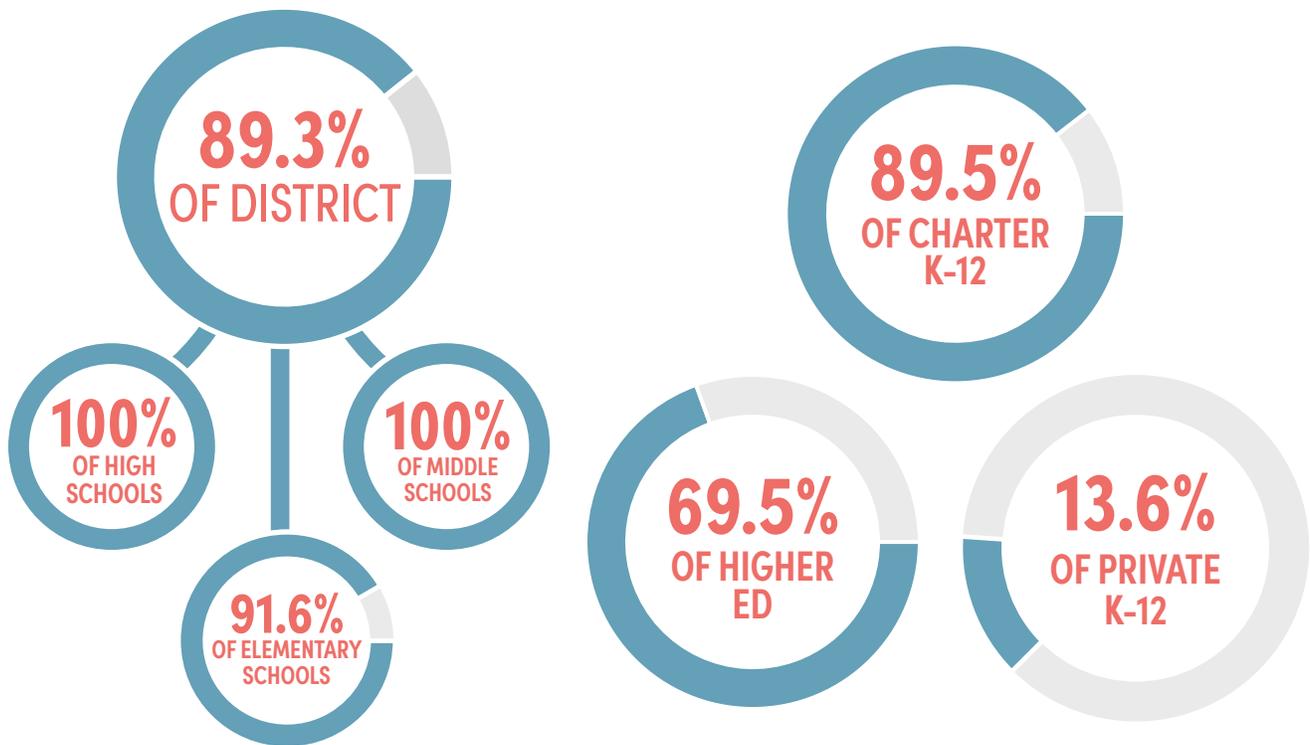
*BYU and Ensign College, formerly LDS Business College, not enrolled

Licensed counselors in our 24/7 Crisis-Line call center respond to all incoming chats and calls by providing supportive or crisis counseling, suicide prevention, and referral services.

SafeUT can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship struggles, mental health, or suicide-related challenges.

30,527
TOTAL CHATS & TIPS
Received from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

30,311
K–12 & Higher Ed Chats & Tips

133
National Guard Chats & Tips

83
Frontline Chats & Tips

LIFE-SAVING INTERVENTIONS

If a SafeUT user is actively attempting suicide or has plans to harm themselves in the immediate future, SafeUT counselors will work in coordination with first responders/school personnel to initiate an active rescue (life-saving intervention).

298
LIFE-SAVING INTERVENTIONS FROM SAFEUT, SAFEUTNG, AND SAFEUT FRONTLINE
*From July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021*

KEY FACTS
K–12 & HIGHER ED TOTAL TIPS

SafeUT allows a student, parent/guardian, or educator to call or send a text message chat in a messaging platform inside the app to a SafeUT crisis counselor. Users can also submit a confidential tip to be triaged by crisis counselors in coordination with school administrators on concerns such as bullying, threats, or violence.

6,274
TOTAL TIPS
Received from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

TOP 10 TIP CATEGORIES

Bar chart values: Suicide 21%, Bullying 9%, Depression 8%, Crisis 7%, Other 6%, Mental Health 6%, Cutting 5%, Drugs 5%, Cyber Bullying 3%, Harassment 3%
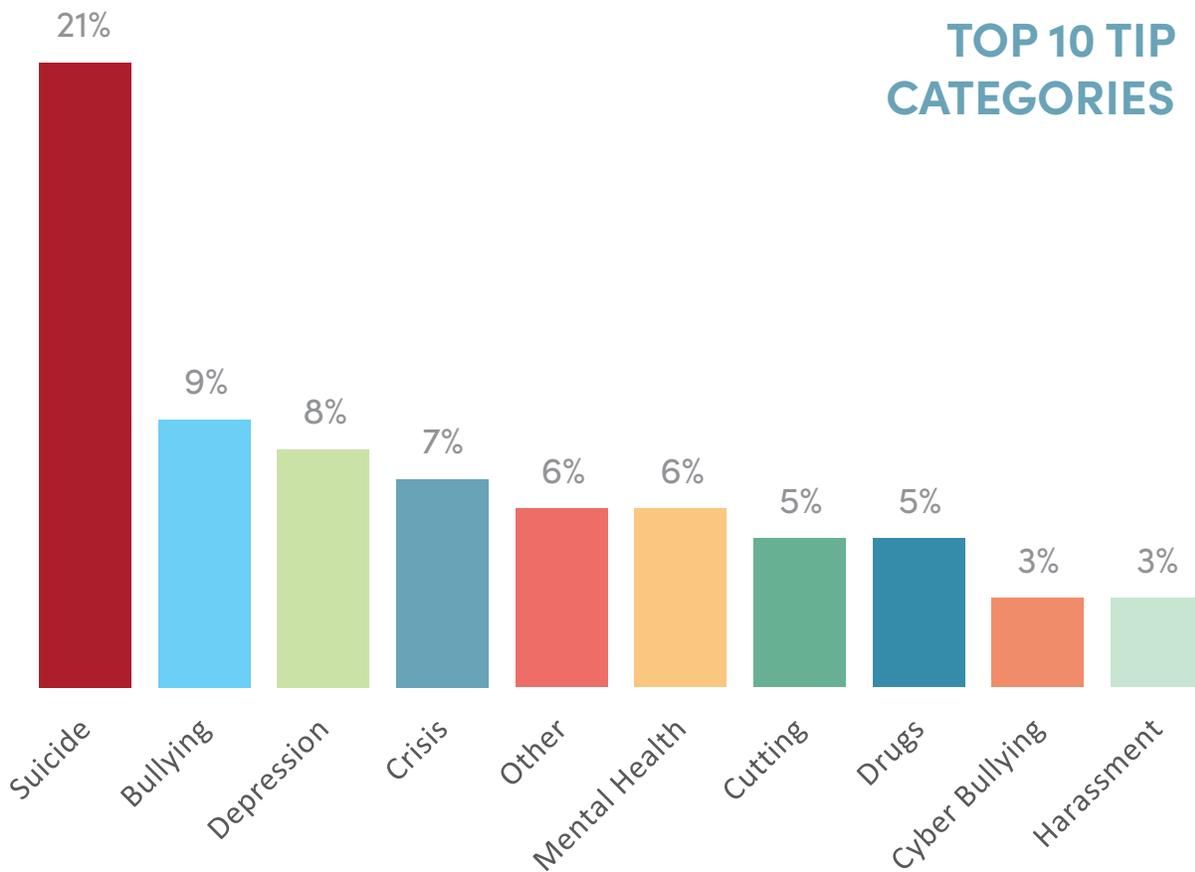
| Category	Tips
SUICIDE:	1,337 TIPS
BULLYING:	562 TIPS
DEPRESSION:	497 TIPS
CRISIS:	454 TIPS
OTHER:	399 TIPS
MENTAL HEALTH:	395 TIPS
CUTTING:	343 TIPS
DRUGS:	286 TIPS
CYBERBULLYING:	210 TIPS
HARASSMENT:	207 TIPS

256
TOTAL THREAT TIPS
Received from July 1, 2020 to June 30 2021

Through the SafeUT app, students, parents/guardians, and educators can submit tips about threats of school violence, weapons, and planned school attacks, along with other school-related concerns. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Utah schools were transitioned to a hybrid or remote learning model during the 2020-2021 school year. Because some students were not physically in schools, SafeUT saw much lower utilization of the tip feature this academic year.

THREAT TIP CATEGORIES

Category	Percentage
Fighting	20%
Violence	18%
Assault	13%
Guns	13%
Knives	10%
Crime	8%
Planned School Attack	7%
Weapons	5%
Planned Fights	4%
Fire Starting	1%
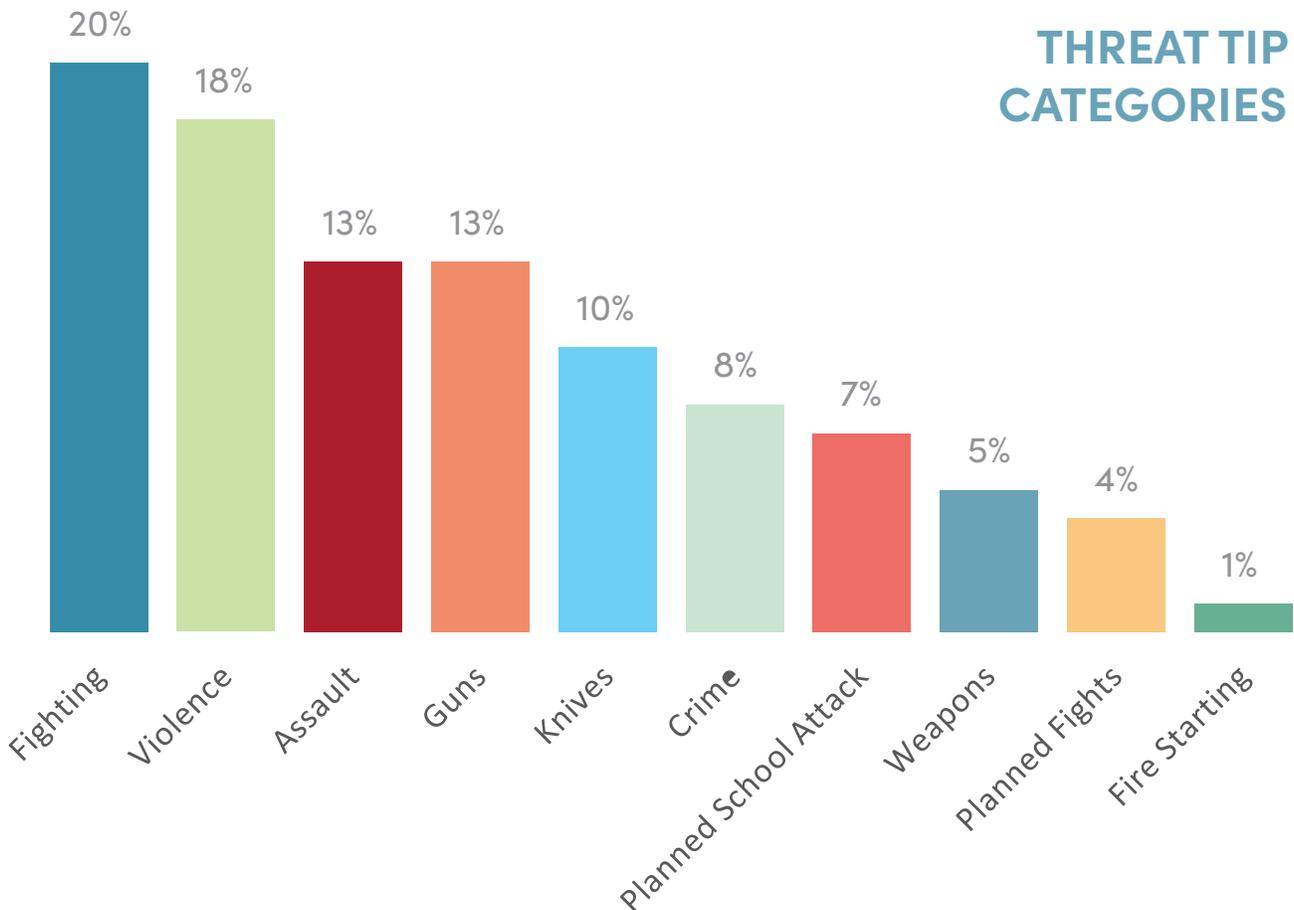
FIGHTING: 51 TIPS   **VIOLENCE: 47 TIPS**   **ASSAULT: 34 TIPS**   **GUNS: 33 TIPS**   **KNIVES: 25 TIPS**

CRIME: 20 TIPS   **PLANNED SCHOOL ATTACKS: 19 TIPS**   **WEAPONS: 13 TIPS**   **PLANNED FIGHTS: 9 TIPS**

FIRE STARTING: 2 TIPS   **EXPLOSIVES: 1 TIP**   **STALKING: 1 TIP**   **THREATS: 1 TIP**

SAFEUT SUPERUSER GRANT PROGRAM
SUPERUSER & SCHOOL SAFETY STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD FACILITATOR GRANT

PURPOSE

The Utah State Board of Education School Safety Center (USBE SSC) and SafeUT, operated by the Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI), have partnered to provide the USBE & SafeUT SuperUser–School Safety Student Advisory Board Facilitator Grant Program for SY2021.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Information gathered from the School Safety Student Advisory Boards is used to help inform and improve school safety efforts in their school and across the state through the work of the USBE SSC.

The grant program provides funding to support the creation of SuperUsers — SafeUT and school safety ambassadors — in local education agencies (LEAs) and increases student collaboration on school safety matters through the development and implementation of School Safety Student Advisory Boards.

$450,000
TOTAL GRANT AWARD AMOUNT

30
SafeUT SuperUsers

10,742
STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED EVIDENCE–BASED CURRICULUM

891
STAFF/FACULTY WHO RECEIVED EVIDENCE–BASED CURRICULUM

IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

1. Creating and facilitating a School Safety Student Advisory Board

2. Implementing/supporting a school-wide, student-focused, evidence-based curriculum on mental wellness

3. Implementing/supporting a school-wide, staff-focused, evidence-based curriculum on mental wellness

4. Planning community involvement and out-reach including, but not limited to:

    a. Building mental health awareness

    b. Increasing collaboration with mental health focused community agencies

    c. Promoting and educating on SafeUT
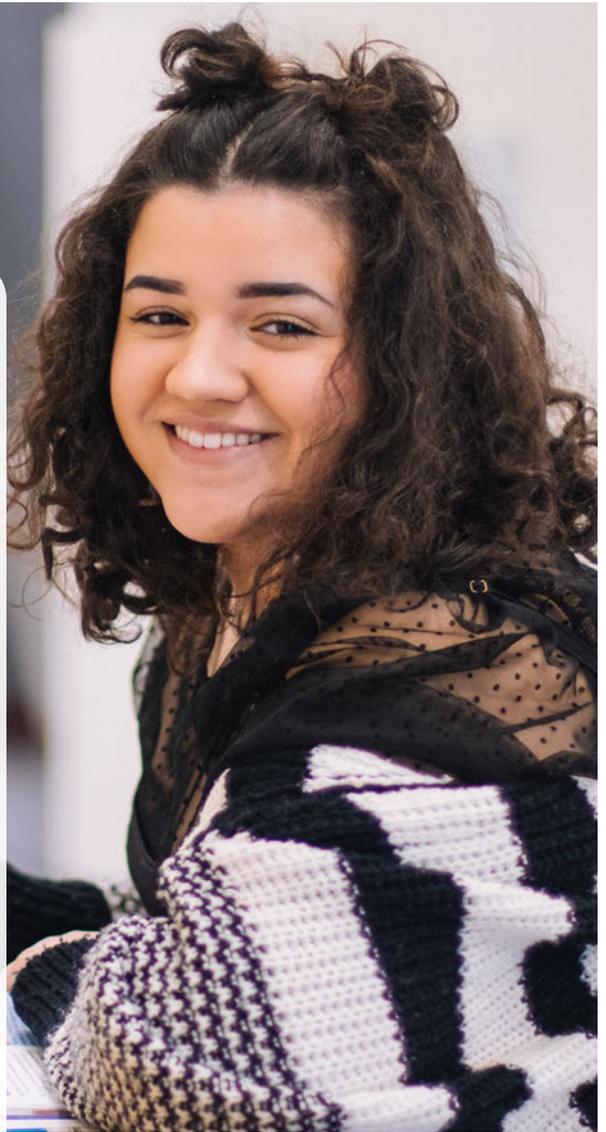
LEAs REPRESENTED

ACADEMY FOR MATH ENGINEERING & SCIENCES	BOX ELDER SCHOOL DISTRICT	DAVIS SCHOOL DISTRICT	EXCELSIOR ACADEMY
JUAB SCHOOL DISTRICT	LAKEVIEW ACADEMY	OGDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT	ROCKWELL CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL · SALT LAKE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
SALT LAKE SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS	SOUTH SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT	SUMMIT ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL	SUMMIT ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL · TOOELE SCHOOL DISTRICT · VALLEY ACADEMY

USER FEEDBACK & SCHOOL USAGE LEVELS

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY FINDINGS

School administrators and staff (predominantly school psychologists, counselors, and social workers) completed a survey about their experiences with SafeUT. Most responders (over 85%) agreed that mental health stigma, overall student wellbeing, concern for school safety, and engagement in acts of kindness have improved at school since enrolling in SafeUT. Most (over 85%) also agreed or strongly agreed that SafeUT is helpful for students and feel supported by both SafeUT and their school communities.

ONGOING RESEARCH AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Efforts are currently underway to investigate the influence of SafeUT on mental health service utilization among its users and to develop a better understanding of barriers to care SafeUT users face. There is also an effort to explore the experiences of the life-saving intervention (active rescue) process among SafeUT users and their families.

SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

"Keep up the good work. I have seen SafeUT save lives on numerous occasions."

"I think this program has positively impacted schools and prevented or stopped students from being harmed in many situations. Even though getting tips does cause some anxiety, I would have much more anxiety without this service because I don't think students would be as forthcoming with information in person."

"Thanks so much for offering this service, it is helping students and saving lives!"

"I really appreciate SafeUT. It has really helped us get to students in need."

STUDENT SAFEUT/BULLYING SURVEY FINDINGS

After mental health challenges, bullying is the second most common tip SafeUT receives. In a survey of 304 students, 44% experienced being bullied at least once during the 2019-2020 school year. Only 4% of these students submitted a tip about bullying to SafeUT. Of the participants who never used SafeUT, 32% indicated this was because they have not had concerns needing support of SafeUT, and 21% reported they did not know about SafeUT.

These findings provide direction for our future research, marketing, and outreach strategies.

SAFEUT UTILIZATION TRENDS

OVERVIEW

The first series of graphs illustrate SafeUT utilization between Fall 2017 and Summer 2020. The data is presented in such a way that small and large LEAs can be compared in relative utilization metrics. This means small LEAs with fewer students and numerically fewer users are not undercounted for having fewer total users, and larger LEAs are not over-represented by numerically having more students.

CRISIS CHATS & TIPS

Figure 1 shows use (which includes both crisis chats and tips, which are reports to the user's school) has gradually increased over the past three years. On average, SafeUT sees 104 new users per term (e.g., fall term, winter term, summer) per 100,000 enrolled students. Note use tends to drop off in summer months, and tends to peak in the middle of the school year, either March (2018, 2019) or November (2019, full data not shown here for ease of interpretation). Use decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely because of reductions in tips, but with a slight increase in chats (data in preparation).
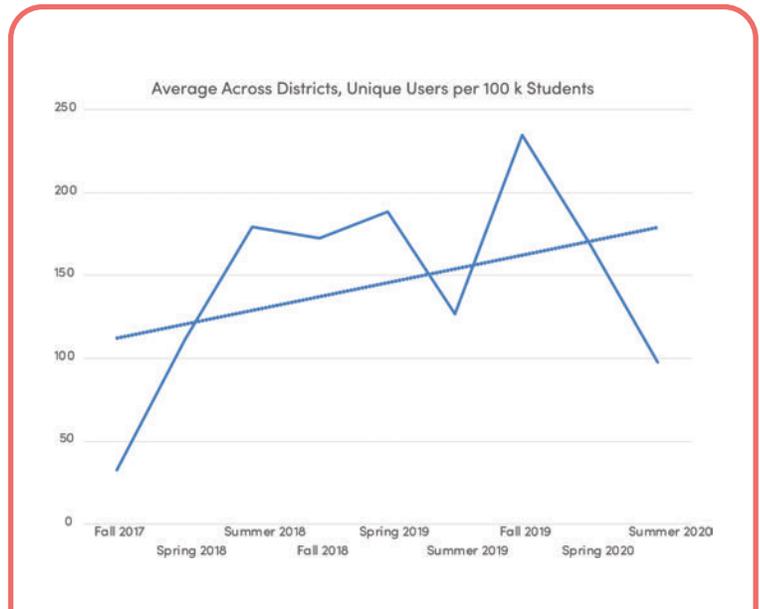

Figure 1. Average number of unique users per month, per 100k students, across the entire state of Utah, since the broader rollout in Fall of 2017. An important disclaimer is SafeUT users have the option of sharing their location information. Based upon this selection by users, nearly 63% of users indicate their location. In result, all data provided here is only based upon that 63% of users. The other 37% could be using SafeUT in a distributed way across Utah, or could be using it in places where SafeUT utilization is lower. A second disclaimer is the data is included by unique users, based upon the Apple or Android app that was accessed. It is possible siblings or family share a particular device, so the data may underrepresent the actual number of unique users. Conversely, some users could delete and reinstall the app, artificially increasing the apparent number of unique users. Nonetheless, it is likely the data generally reflects the number of unique users, on a monthly basis, as a rate of 100k students.

104

ADDITIONAL UNIQUE USERS ACCESSING SAFEUT EACH TERM, ON AVERAGE
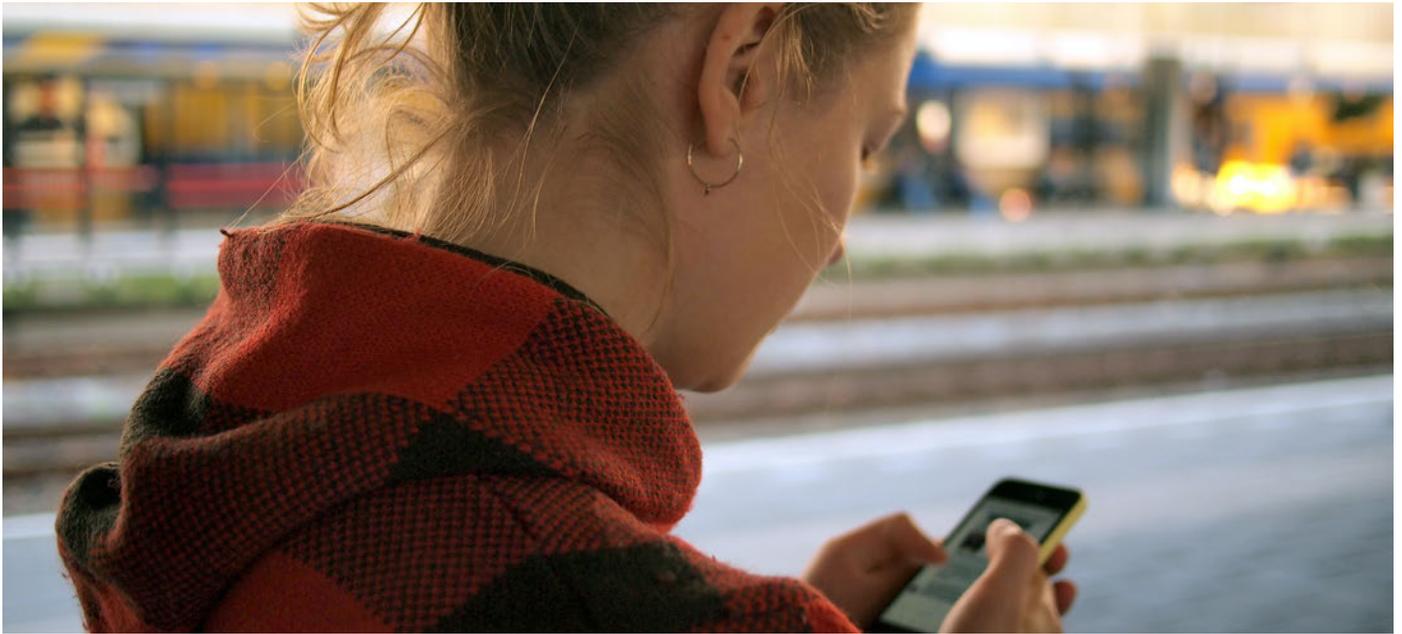
HIGHEST & LOWEST UTILIZATION DISTRICTS

In Figure 2, use in the highest utilization districts are displayed. These districts are the main drivers of increased utilization over the past four years. Figure 3, on the other hand, illustrates the districts with lowest utilization to date. There are a small number of districts that have fairly sporadic use. This suggests the possibility of increasing SafeUT uptake in those areas through additional marketing and out–reach. As a number of these districts are quite small, it is also possible there are other means by which children with mental health crisis needs are accessing resources.
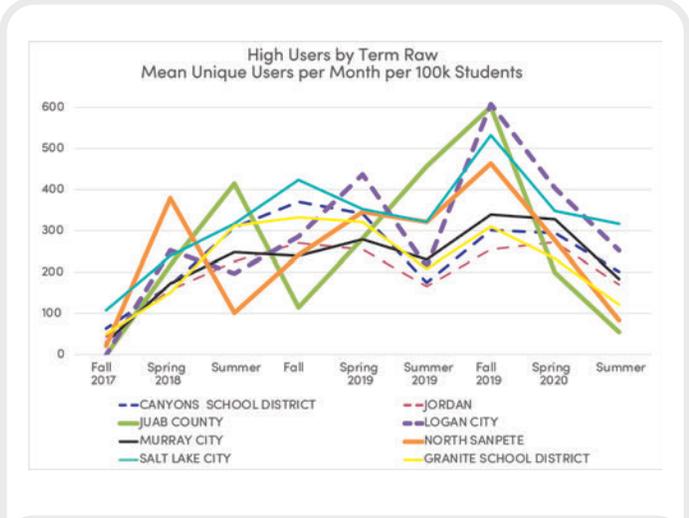

Figure 2. Average unique numbers of users in the highest utilization school districts. While most of these are in the Wasatch Front, they do extend north to south and do include central and southern districts.
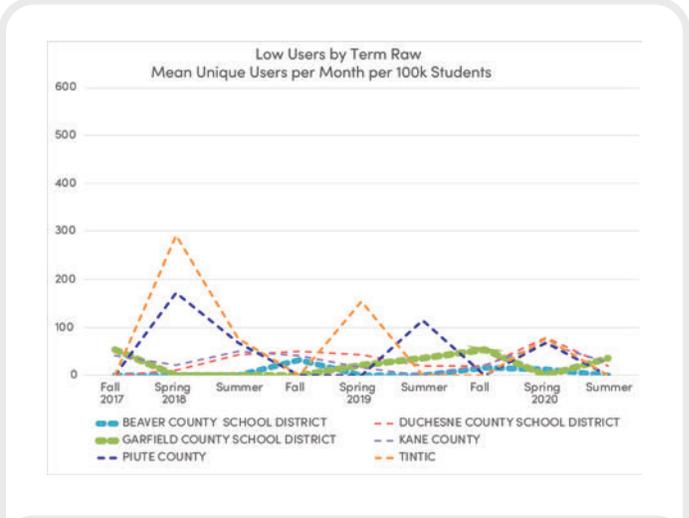

Figure 3. School districts with low utilization, Fall 2017– Summer 2020

GEOSPATIAL ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF COVID–19 INFECTION RATES ON SAFEUT UTILIZATON

OVERVIEW

During COVID-19, the SafeUT team noticed a change in utilization of the app. More specifically, the intensity and duration of conversations seemed to have increased. Wanting to better understand these observations, our researchers conducted an analysis of app usage across the state before and during the pandemic. Results from this examination clearly show the increasing COVID-19 infection rates over 2020 were associated with an increased count of chats for suicidal ideation and related struggles. This implies increasing stress related to the pandemic may have increased the frequency of SafeUT users experiencing a mental health crisis. By using a geospatial analysis, we were able to see utilization increase was stronger for persons living in areas with higher poverty rates. The analysis also showed us persons living in areas with higher non-white populations were less likely to utilize SafeUT for any reason, suggesting mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may have been greater for SafeUT users who already had economic stressors. This could be for several reasons: persons in these areas are less culturally disposed to ask for help, they have less awareness of the service, they have less ability to access the service because of financial or technological barriers, or they have less support and outreach through the schools.

SafeUT Encounters for Suicide Crisis by Census Block Group	
Factors Increasing # of SafeUT Chats	
COVID-19 infection rate (monthly average)	↑ (2.2) more use in areas with higher COVID rates
Interaction between household poverty rate (higher) and COVID-19 Infection rate (higher)	↑ (5.3) more use in high poverty areas with higher numbers of COVID cases
Factors Decreasing # of SafeUT Chats	
Household mobility	↓ (0.95) less use in transitional and short-term housing areas
Percentage of population that is non-white	↓ (0.3) less use in minorities
Population density	↓ (0.8) less use in rural and frontier areas
Summer months	↓ (0.6) less use during summer months
Factors with no Impact on # of SafeUT Chats	
Educational attainment (percentage of college graduates)	No significant effect
Remote Schooling (Area within Salt Lake County school district)	No significant effect
Percentage of households below poverty line	No significant effect
Ratio of mental health providers to population	No significant effect
Unemployment rate	No significant effect

Table 1. Associations between SafeUT use, COVID-19 infection rates, and sociodemographic variables by census block group. Rates (absolute numbers of encounters) are shown for both all SafeUT encounters and SafeUT encounters involving suicide crisis. Up arrows (↑) indicate a significant positive association; down arrows (↓) indicate a significant negative association.
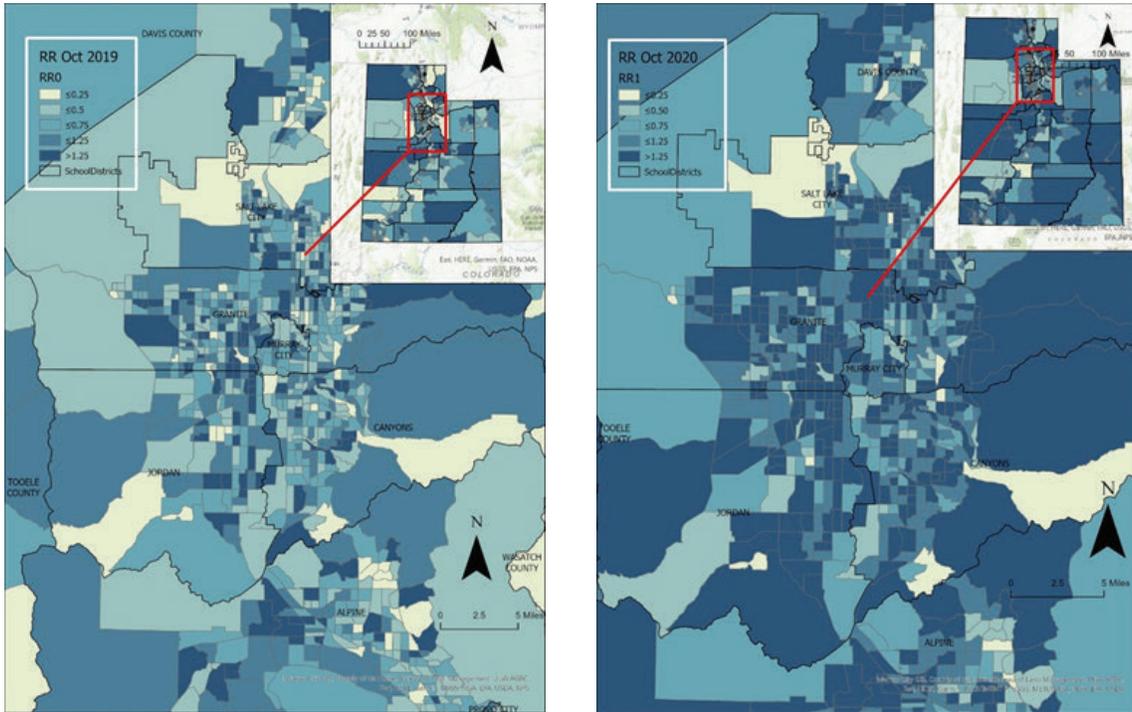
Figure 4. Relative rates of all SafeUT encounters by census geographic location, October 2019 vs October 2020. Rates are relative to adolescent population and are normalized to the October 2019 mean. Darker colors indicate higher relative rate of use. In most census block groups, the normalized relative rate of SafeUT encounters increased between October 2019 and October 2020.
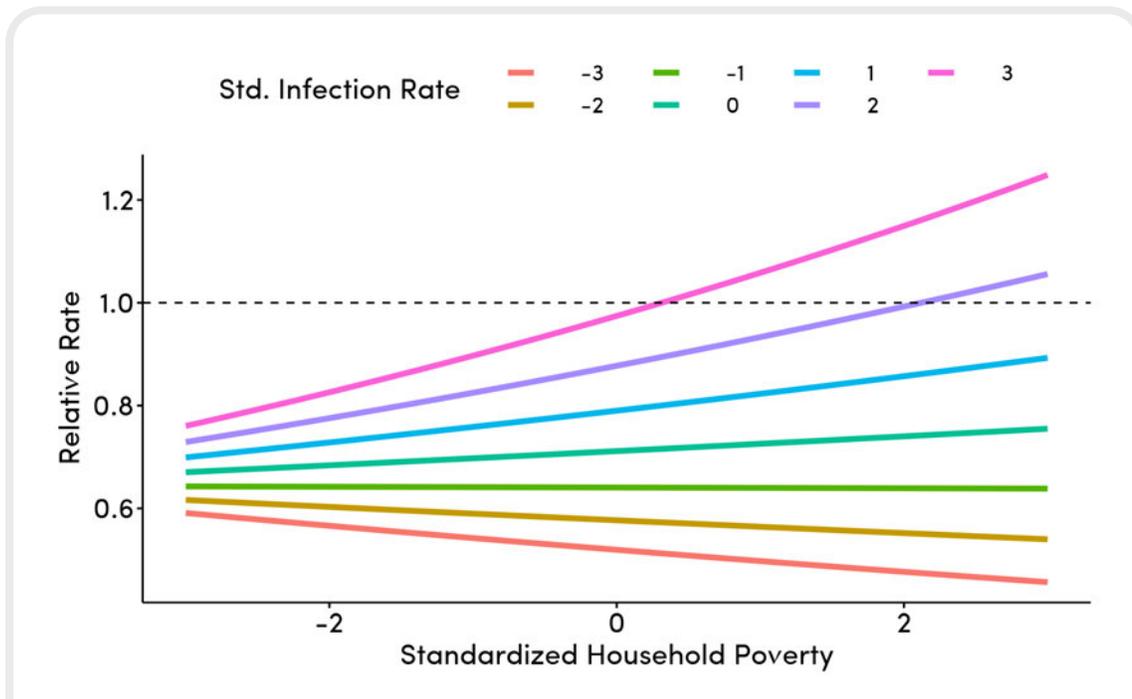

Figure 5. Interaction between poverty, COVID-19 infection rate, and relative rate of SafeUT use for all causes. Colored bands represent different subsets of poverty levels (3 represents regions with highest poverty rate, -3 represents regions with the lowest poverty rate). Relative rates of SafeUT use increased the most, as COVID-19 infection rates increase, in areas with the highest percentage of households below the poverty line.

SAFEUT NATIONAL GUARD

OVERVIEW

SafeUTNG was launched in December 2019 in collaboration with HMHI, U Health IT, and the Utah National Guard. Since launching, SafeUTNG has had more than 1,500 downloads and continues to help our service members, civilian personnel, and their families who may be struggling. Users of the app connect with a master's level counselor 24/7/365 confidentially and at no cost to them. "SafeUTNG is another vital tool we have in the Guard to support soliders and airmen while they continue to serve our community," Annika Hunt, LCSW and Wing Director of Psychological Health for the Utah Air National Guard said. "It is an added support to Guard families as they deal with incredible stressors of our time. As a mental health provider, I want every guardsman and family member to have this quick connection in their pocket for when they need it. The Utah National Guard has protected our community; always ready, always there. SafeUTNG is here for them."

Download Here

OVERVIEW

With the increasing demand and pressure on Utah's frontline workers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SafeUT Commission recognized the need for quick and easy access to crisis support and mental health services for Utah law enforcement, Fire/EMS, and health care providers. In a letter to legislators, the Commission wrote SafeUT Frontline "would directly provide a safety valve and 24/7 emotional support outlet for these men and women."

On December 30, 2020, SafeUT Frontline rolled out a pilot program to select groups across the state. The distinguishing feature from SafeUT is the removal of the tip functionality on the app. This is because for frontline workers, barriers to treatment tend to involve questions about the confidentiality in service provision. Instead, SafeUT Frontline focuses on the confidential chat option to text with crisis counselors 24/7/365. The app is now available to all frontline workers across the state.

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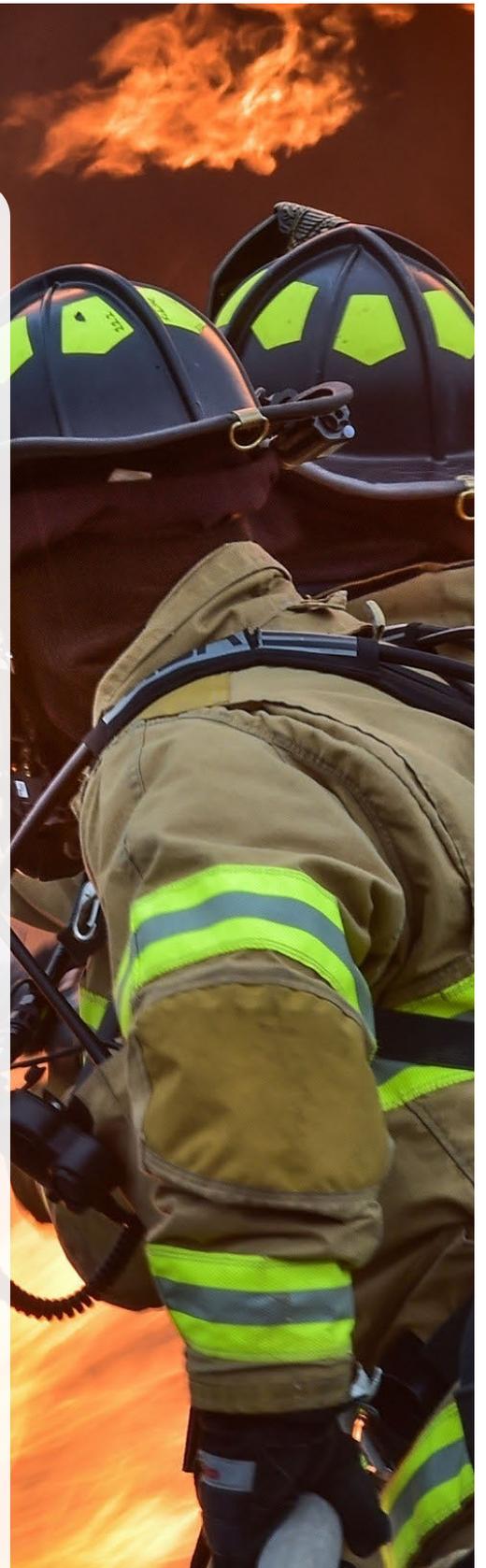
ADVOCACY STORY

The Doucette family: Greg, Heidi, Luc, and Logan.

It's mid-summer and Heidi and Greg Doucette's lives are much different than they were just months ago, forever changed with a new mission and purpose.

"This is where we hang out in his memory in hopes to make a difference, to reduce stigma, and increase the conversations," Heidi said as she sits on their patio reflecting on what the space has become.

In January 2021, their son, Logan, died by suicide. He attended Brighton High School, played hockey, and enjoyed helping classmates. Today, the Doucettes continue Logan's legacy of serving others by making it their life mission to raise awareness of suicide prevention.

"I really feel like the universe is asking us to take this on to help anybody like Logan who suffered in silence and didn't want to have the label because of the stigma," Heidi said. "He did not want to let anybody know he was broken."

"I think Logan was concerned with the optics," Greg said, adding that students need to be frequently reminded they're not weak when they need help.

Logan struggled with depression for years. It affected his sleep and performance at school. While his family knew about his depression and took him to a doctor to receive treatment, they were unaware of the risk of suicide that can linger with the disease. There were signs of suicide that Logan's peers can now recall, but in the moment they too did not make the connection.

"We were not aware at the time of the high risk of suicide linked to depression," Heidi said. "We just have so many tips of things that we missed as parents, that teachers missed, and a primary care physician possibly had an opportunity [to catch]."

Heidi takes to the quote "it takes a village," and believes there is an opportunity for the village — parents, educators, coaches, and students — to become educated about what to look for as signs of suicide. Because of the lack of community knowledge, the Doucettes believe the village failed Logan. If the village becomes more aware and skilled in detection, they will have healing.

"There's a stigma and a lack of education," Greg said. "I was ignorant enough to think Heidi and I would be the first to find out [if Logan was suicidal] and that's just simply not the case. I viewed Logan as my son, my friend, and part of my team as I was his coach. He still couldn't come to me. Parents need to be educated. Kids need to be educated."

One in three people have some type of mental health challenge in their lifetime. And, per the Public Health Indicator Based Information System, Utah's public health data resource, suicide was the leading cause of death for Utahns ages 10 to 17 and 18–24 in 2019.

"You think not my child. That's not going to happen here. That happens to other people,"

Heidi said. "And even if it isn't your child, what if it's your child's best friend? What do you do with that? That's why the whole community needs to be trained and the only way to do that is through the education system."

The Doucettes strongly encourage schools to add mental health to their curriculum, yearly orientations, and even get athletics and coaches involved. It could not only save a student, but help one save a friend. People don't always seek mental health professionals, but they talk with their friends, family, coworkers, church leaders, and other community members.

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

Comments or thoughts about suicide can start small such as, "I wish I wasn't here" or "Nothing matters." Here are other actions that can be signs of suicide:

- Aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and the community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Impulsive or reckless behavior
- Lack of concern or safety
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Unsafe driving
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use

"I don't want any other parent to go through what we're going through," Heidi said followed by a long sigh. "It's an atomic bomb. It eviscerates the insides of a human being."

"How do we move forward?" she asked. "I do think that we need more SafeUT in schools."

The SafeUT app is a place where the village can receive support in times of uncertainty. With licensed counselors ready every day at any time to be a listening ear for any size crisis, there is hope the village will grow stronger.

Maybe an educator notices something off about a student and needs a resource for how to help. Perhaps a parent is feeling overwhelmed with life's stressors. A student could be anxious and wants to ask for help, but doesn't know who to turn to. These are all things SafeUT can help with in the palm of one's hand.

Feeling alone doesn't have to be an option. Whether someone wants to speak with a loved one about how they're feeling or not, SafeUT is always available whenever someone is ready to talk.

"Not talking about it is not working," Greg said. "Let's normalize it. That's the mission here."

Download Here

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE WARNING SIGNS

- Find out the imminence and severity of the danger they're in by asking direct questions such as: "Maybe it's me, but I was wondering if you're ok," "Hey, are you free to talk? I'm worried about you," or "Are you sure you're ok?"

- If you're worried someone is in immediate danger, download the SafeUT app and ask for help, or call the Utah CrisisLine 800.273.TALK (800.273.8255). Help is available 24/7/365 at no cost.

- Directly ask them if they've had thoughts of suicide. This doesn't make someone more likely to attempt suicide. It can actually save their life.

- Be there for them, whether it's physically or digitally, and listen to what they have to say.

- Help them develop a safety plan.

- Make sure to follow up with them.

COMMISSION MEMBERS

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Commission Chair
Utah Attorney General's Office

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Utah State House of Representatives

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Utah System of Higher Education

Missy Wilson Larsen
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Utah Department of Human Services

Rebecca Lee
Staff to the Commission
Utah Attorney General's Office

THE COMMISSION & PARTNERS

SAFE UT

2020–2021
ANNUAL
REPORT

INCREASING AWARENESS AROUND LOCATION SERVICES FOR SAFEUT

Imagine what would happen if you called 911 and they were unable to track your exact location in order to send emergency services to help.

Allowing location access while using the SafeUT app has that same potential impact for saving lives. Will you commit to helping us increase awareness around allowing location access for SafeUT? When you share information about SafeUT with kids and teens, please remind them to allow location access while using the app.