



April 15, 2022

2022 Legislative Outcomes: Statewide Mental Health Services and State Financial Aid Revisions

Statewide Mental Health Services

The Commissioner's office has worked with institutional Senior Student Affairs Officers, the [Huntsman Mental Health Institute \(HMHI\)](#), and [the JED Foundation](#) to build out the strategy identified in the Board's strategic plan to "ensure system-wide institutional supports for student mental health and campus safety."

[In August 2021, the Student Affairs Committee recommended two initiatives](#) that support this strategy for the Board to include in its legislative funding priorities for the 2022 Legislative Session. The Legislature fully funded this \$3 million appropriations request to the Commissioner's office. Both initiatives support an expanded spectrum of mental health for postsecondary students that focuses on alleviating the triage-like caseloads currently inundating on-campus mental health counseling services. This care includes preventative services, earlier and more accessible assessment, and after-hours mobile response. The statewide initiatives, in conjunction with current on-campus and/or community providers, improve student access to mental health supports while accounting for varying institutional missions.

After-hours crisis response and prevention pilot (\$1.5 million)

The University of Utah has piloted an after-hours mobile crisis response service since January 2021 with significant results. The pilot, [MH-1](#), provides de-escalation, intervention/coping, workshops, and assessment. The services operate after-hours (4 PM-2 AM) when individuals are most likely to enter a crisis. Services are anchored in university housing with supporting resources from HMHI and University Health. The teams would be closely integrated with on-campus services as well as community mental health providers, including necessary clinical admitting privileges embedded within the response team, currently not available at almost all USHE institutions. Initially, funding would cover two licensed social workers, a director, two interns, and associated costs, averaging \$500,000 per institution, or \$1.5 million total annually.

This pilot is intended to address several gaps in mental health services identified by the JED Foundation at its convening held in June 2021:

- Expand clinical capacity

- Strengthen partnerships with state and local service providers to improve continuity of care
- Increase case management capability
- Improve access to mental health and well-being service information

Wellness coaching and assessment available to all USHE students (\$1.45 million)

In 2020, USHE received one-time funds to pilot peer coaching and assessment services. USHE contracted with the Trula Foundation, which has been rolling out an evidence-based, campus-integrated, peer support program for early anxiety intervention. The program provides training based on best practice training programs, such as QPR (QPR Institute), Mental Health First Aid (National Council of Behavioral Health), and CPE (NASPA). JED also identified coaching and assessment programs as a best practice for higher education mental health strategic planning. Over the past 18 months, USHE institutions have explored various forms of wellness coaching programs. Funding would support campus-based implementation of wellness coaching to all USHE students.

Implementation Timeline:

In the near-term, state funding would continue to develop the mobile crisis pilot at the University of Utah, then expand to at least two additional USHE institutions. Long-term, as the model matures, economies of scale and in-kind support from USHE institutions could expand the mobile response service throughout the regions served. Together with availability of statewide wellness coaching, mobile crisis response will be an especially critical resource in rural areas, where geography is a more significant barrier to mental health services.

State Financial Aid Revisions

In support of the Board’s strategy to “evaluate and prioritize state financial aid,” the Commissioner’s office, after [discussion at the Student Affairs Committee in October 2021](#), pursued legislation ([HB 355, Higher Education Financial Aid Amendments](#)) to streamline many of the state aid programs administered by the Utah Board of Higher Education. The objectives of these changes are to:

1. Increase equitably available awards to students from historically underserved populations; and
2. Enable reporting consistency and accountability.

The following is a summary of changes to state aid programs in HB 355:

- Changes *Public Safety Officer Career Advancement Reimbursement Program* to a grant program.
- Merges the outdated *Higher Education Success Stipend* with the *Utah Promise Scholarship*.
- Converts the *Talent Development Incentive Loan Program* to a scholarship program and prioritizes awards to students who demonstrate financial need.
- Establishes alternative paths for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Enables the Board to forgive legacy loan repayments for *TH Bell Loan* legacy program.

- Allows the Utah Board of Higher Education to establish an inter-institutional tuition benefit for all higher education employees at all 16 institutions.
- Consolidates administrative silos across programs.
- Removes outdated and conflicting terms, including residency limitations.
- Makes all state aid programs “stackable” by removing language prohibiting students from applying to multiple awards programs.

New policies and existing policy revisions associated with HB 355 will be presented to the Finance and Facilities Committee at the May 2022 meeting.

Commissioner’s Recommendation

This is an information item only; no action is required.