



Utah health improvement plan 2023–2028 Summary



Introduction

The Utah health improvement plan (UHIP) is a statewide collaborative designed to address health priorities with people and agencies in Utah who are committed to improve the health of all Utahns. The goal of the UHIP is to positively impact complex health concerns and reduce similar work through collaboration that aligns goals and maximizes resources. This approach supports the Utah Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) vision for all Utahns to have fair and equitable opportunities to live healthy and safe lives.

The UHIP is led and coordinated primarily by DHHS and local health department (LHD) staff, but relies on strong participation from many organizations and individuals in order to maximize impact to move the needle within selected priorities.

The 2023–2028 UHIP builds on data gathered through many sources, including the state health assessment process. While many state health improvement plans, including the last UHIP, focus primarily on categorical or single outcomes, input for the new UHIP led to a focus to improve upstream protective factors with potential to positively impact multiple outcomes in Utah’s communities.

UHIP vision

All Utahns will experience connection & health access to achieve optimal mental, physical, and economic health.

The 2023-2028 UHIP will:

Increase mental, physical, and economic health protective factors by **building connectedness** and **improving health access**

This will be done in 4 workgroups focused on:

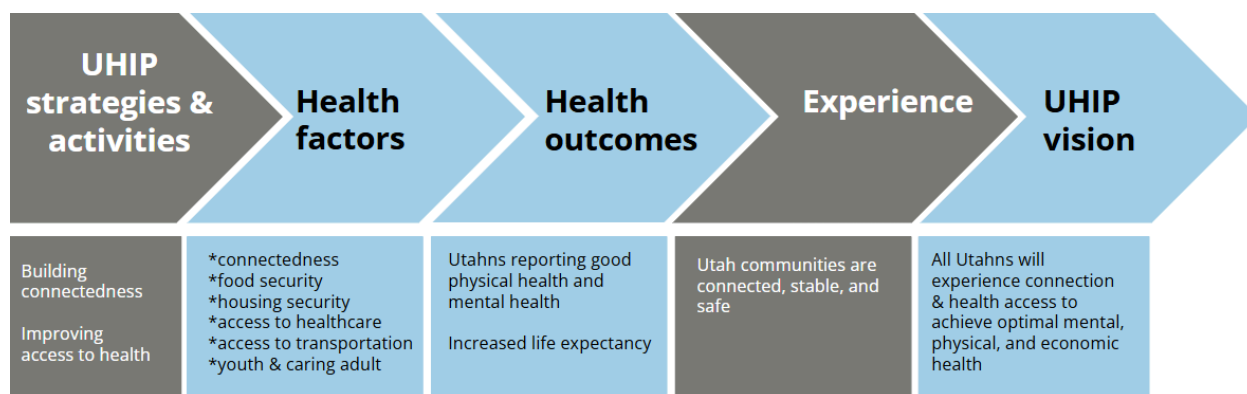
- Low income populations
- Youth
- Individuals with disabilities
- Deepening our knowledge (data, messaging, communications)

Building connectedness

Across the United States, and in Utah, social isolation and loneliness have become widespread problems that negatively impact mental and physical health. When people are socially connected and have supportive relationships, they are more likely to make healthy choices, are better able to cope with stress, anxiety, and depression, and have better health outcomes overall (Office of the Surgeon General, 2023).

Improving health access

In addition to healthcare, access to health includes the ability to access those things necessary for health and well-being such as safe housing, nutritious food, and transportation. When access to health, broadly defined, is improved people have access to the resources to help them make healthy choices, receive appropriate care, and have better health outcomes overall. By working collectively to improve conditions supportive to good health, the UHIP effort will improve a variety of health factors and lead to improved outcomes like Utahns reporting good physical and mental health and quality of life.



The UHIP relies on multi-sector engagement in the workgroups to advance this work, including individuals from multiple agencies and communities. Improvement in these priorities will only occur with united efforts involving multiple partners. Implementing this plan together promises to demonstrate the value of this innovative, upstream approach.

Low income populations

One quarter of Utahns live at 200% of the federal poverty level, or below (IBIS, 2022). Economic opportunity is one of the most powerful predictors of good health. When families are in poverty, they often do not have reliable access to the goods and services that are necessary for a healthy life. Low income individuals and families are more likely to experience food and housing insecurity than the overall population. They are also more likely to report that they never, rarely, or sometimes get the social and emotional support that they need.

Build connectedness for low income populations by:	In order to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the current state of connectedness for low income populations • Increasing community engagement • Identifying key transportation partners and active transportation efforts aimed at improving the transportation infrastructure to increase opportunities for social connectedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease loneliness • Improve mental health • Decrease social isolation
Improve access to health for low income populations by:	In order to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying ways to support healthy school meals for all • Understanding the barriers to enrollment in food security programs • Educating people on EITC eligibility and use • Building the capacity of state and local public health and partner agencies to work with housing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase healthy eating • Improved financial stability • Improve chronic disease outcomes

Youth

According to the surgeon general's report on loneliness and isolation, loneliness rates among young adults in the United States have increased every year between 1976 and 2019 (Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, 2023). In 2019 and 2021, the Utah Prevention Needs Assessment survey (administered to youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12) and the BRFSS survey (administered to adults 18+) asked the same set of 4 questions to create a scale for social loneliness. Nationally, older adults are disproportionately impacted by isolation, however in Utah, data shows isolation is not a significant issue for older adults.

Build connectedness for youth by:	In order to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote daily positive interactions between youth and parents, or other caregivers • Engage parents and caregivers (2-generation approach) to model healthy social media and screen time behaviors, including disconnecting, being present with others, and putting phones down to improve connectedness at home • Understand and address the barriers and facilitators to social connectedness for youth who are experiencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase positive connections with caring adults and youth. • Increase healthy social media and technology behaviors • Reduced screen time • Increase understanding of the root causes of

the highest levels of social isolation at the interpersonal, school, and community levels	social connectedness disparities among youth
Improve access to health for youth by:	In order to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage schools, universities, and trade schools to partner on efforts to reduce food insecurity. • Expand access and use of systems and programs to improve mental and physical health in youth populations. • Increase health literacy among parents/caregivers, and young adults who attend universities and trade schools to increase capacity to navigate healthcare and health resources and increase health seeking behaviors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to healthcare through telehealth options for youth • Decrease food insecurity among youth • Increase health literacy among youth

Individuals with disabilities

Social support plays an especially critical role in the lives of people who have disabilities. The health and wellness of people with disabilities in Utah is directly correlated with their level of social connectedness. In addition to providing emotional support and a sense of belonging, social connections provide practical assistance with daily tasks, transportation, and help to access resources. This practical support helps individuals with disabilities maintain independence and manage their daily lives more effectively. Social connections also play a significant role in facilitating employment opportunities for people with disabilities through job search assistance, providing opportunities for skill development and training, and support and advocacy for individuals with disabilities in the workplace, to make sure they receive necessary accommodations and support.

Build connectedness for individuals with disabilities by:	In order to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Utah • Enhance transportation accessibility for individuals with disabilities • Strengthen social support networks for individuals with disabilities by promoting social inclusion and community engagement for individuals with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve mental health (reduced social isolation) • Decrease percentage of people with disabilities who experience transportation barriers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase percentage of people with disabilities participating in the workforce
Improve access to health for individuals with disabilities by:	In order to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the awareness, accessibility, and use of telehealth options for individuals with disabilities in Utah • Increase the number of healthcare providers in Utah who are trained, equipped, and incentivized to deliver high-quality care to individuals with disabilities • Increase the availability and quality of care coordination and patient navigation services for individuals with disabilities in Utah to help them coordinate services and supports within and across healthcare and social service systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access and use of healthcare • Increase provider competency to provide accessible care for individuals with disabilities • Increase accessibility of healthcare services and systems

Deepening our knowledge (data/messaging/communications)

We need to deepen our knowledge to better understand the data as it relates to social connectedness and health outcomes. The messaging about UHIP priorities needs to be well thought out and clearly communicated. The deepening our knowledge workgroup is designed to increase understanding and awareness and support the efforts of the other UHIP workgroups.

Increase understanding and awareness of building connectedness and access to health by:	In order to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify factors that influence social connectedness and health outcomes related to access to health and social connectedness • Identify and evaluate data sources related to access to health and social connectedness in Utah and describe the data available for stratifying data by communities of focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding of the relationship between health outcomes and interventions associated with access to health and social connectedness • Increase understanding of the available Utah data, resources, and current activities related to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and define key terms and common language to be used when communicating about the UHIP • Develop communication plan(s) • Increase awareness around access to health as a health-related social need • Increase awareness around loneliness and social connectedness as a health-related social need • Identify community contacts who work with and/or are part of the communities of focus • Develop an engagement plan to connect with communities and develop open lines of communications • Evaluate UHIP activities around access to health and social connectedness 	<p>access to health and social connectedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of UHIP activities aimed to improve access to health and social connectedness • Increase community engagement with Utah health improvement plan goals and activities related to access to health and social connectedness • Ensure resources are allocated effectively for Utah health improvement plan activities around access to health and social connectedness
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