



Safe and Healthy Schools Newsletter

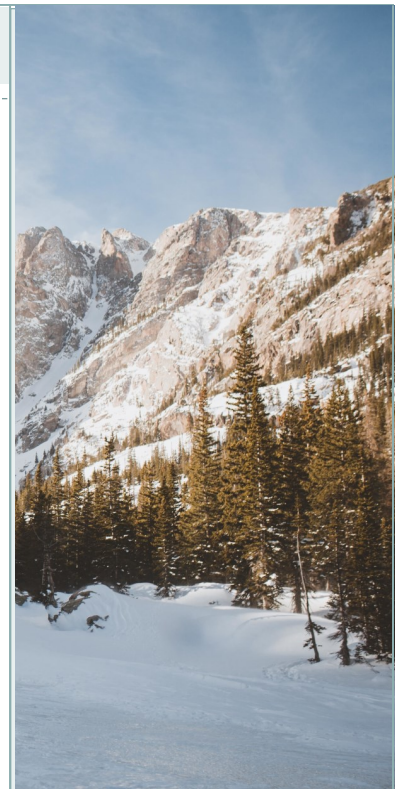
TEAM HIGHLIGHT

Shauntelle Cota is excited to join the Safe and Healthy Schools team as the new Coordinator. She brings 25 years of experience in the field of education having served as a teacher, school counselor, administrator, and consultant to schools across the country. In these roles, she has collaborated with a variety of populations as well as provided leadership on large scale and smaller projects. She values the rich and diverse viewpoints she has garnered through each experience and is committed to constantly expanding her knowledge through all professional and personal interactions.

Shauntelle views learning as a journey rather than a destination. She is currently a doctoral candidate completing a Ph.D in Psychology with an emphasis on cognition and instruction. She also teaches meditation and yoga classes to her local community and is an advocate for mindfulness practices. She is thrilled to be part of such an amazing team invested in supporting school-based mental health, physical health, and safe schools for our Utah educators and students.

SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS WEBSITE UPDATES

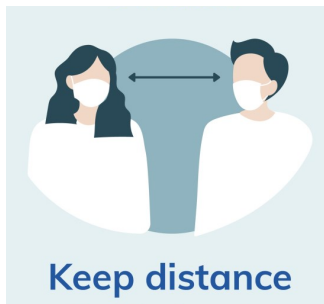
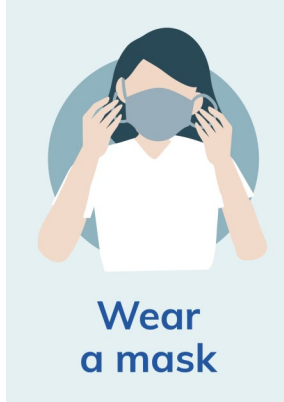
The webpage is undergoing an upgrade! These changes will provide in depth information for the Utah School Safety Framework and the programs that support it. Stay current on grant opportunities, upcoming trainings, new resources, and much more. <https://schools.utah.gov/safehealthyschools>



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- How to Protect Yourself and Others from Illness
- Informing Stakeholders Regarding School Safety Protocols
- The Importance of School Counseling
- Maintaining a Safe and Welcoming Environment
- Building Connections in Schools
- School-based Mental Health Screenings

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM ILLNESS



What is the best way to protect yourself from getting sick, either from COVID-19 or other illnesses? According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the best ways to avoid illness include:

- Get vaccinated, including the booster dose.
- Wear a mask. Everyone two years or older who is not fully vaccinated should wear a mask when indoors. In areas of substantial or high transmission, it is recommended that everyone wear a mask indoors, regardless of vaccination status.
- Stay a minimum of six feet away from others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid crowded places like restaurants, bars, fitness centers, or movie theaters.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly.
- Stay home when experiencing any symptoms.

People who have a medical condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated. These individuals should continue to take all precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitted mask until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider. Teach children and other vulnerable people in our lives how to protect themselves as well.

It is important to remain vigilant and stay alert when around other people who may be experiencing an asymptomatic illness.

For more information refer to a reputable site like the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>).

“Winners are not people who never fail, but people who never quit.” - Unknown

INFORMING STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING SCHOOL SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The Utah State Board of Education School Safety Center (SSC) comprises specialists from the Utah State Board of Education, the Department of Public Safety, the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, and SafeUT at the Huntsman Mental Health Institute. Together this group works to support local education agencies (LEAs) through training and technical assistance.

Schools have been inundated with social media challenges and threats in the past few months. The SSC continually works with education leaders and stakeholders to inform and find ways to support LEAs through these challenges. Schools are encouraged to make parents and communities aware of the protocols in place (such as threat assessment) to identify and determine if threats are serious or not serious. It is important to remember that Utah schools are, by and large, very safe places for students.



THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

School counselors provide critical academic, emotional, and social support as part of school youth support and mental health teams. A comprehensive school counseling program that promotes success and achievement for all students can help set students on a path for postsecondary success. Utah school counselors are generally the first point of contact when students need assistance with academic, social, emotional, or even physical support. School counselors help produce better academic outcomes for students such as improved attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, and higher graduation rates.

National School Counseling Week, with the theme “Better Together,” was celebrated February 7-11, 2022 to recognize and acknowledge the impact that school counselors have on students, families, and communities. Utah school counselors are amazing and continually advocate for their students, and their students’ futures.



GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ [Grow Your Own Teacher and School Counselor Pipeline Program Grant](#)
- ◆ [School-based Mental Health Qualified Grant Program](#)
- ◆ [School-based Mental Health Screening Grant](#)

Coming Spring 2022. Visit each grant page to get more details.



MAINTAINING A SAFE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

As the school year is winding down, it is very important to continue to think about the environment schools create for students. The design of a classroom can significantly influence the behavior of students and adults in the space. Well-designed classrooms are safe and inviting spaces intentionally designed to promote focus and participation in learning activities, facilitate smooth transitions and movement, and build a sense of community in the classroom.

Here are some features to consider in designing learning environments:

- Furniture and classroom areas are arranged to create a smooth flow of traffic for everyone in the classroom;
- Student areas and materials are equally accessible for all, including students with mobility devices, service dogs, or other accommodations;
- The teacher can see and move around the entire classroom easily, allowing for visual and proximity-based supervision and behavior support;
- Classroom bulletin boards and other visual elements are easy for students to see & reflect student contributions, interests, communities, and cultures;
- Clutter and distraction are minimized in all areas of the classroom, including bulletin boards, surfaces, floors/corners, and storage;
- Students have a regular place to store belongings and materials when not in use;
- Some spaces in the classroom allow for quiet activities;
- The classroom has a designated break space (away from busy/loud areas of the room) where any student can take a brief break as needed.



“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” - Helen Keller

*“Believe you can and you are halfway there.”
- Theodore Roosevelt*

BUILDING CONNECTIONS IN SCHOOLS

Research has shown that the more connected students feel to school, the more likely they are to experience positive education and health outcomes. Dr. Chathuri Illaperuma-Wood, with the University of Utah’s School Mental Health Collaborative, recently participated in a webinar hosted by the USBE Prevention Team and shared four factors that contribute to school connectedness:

1 - **Adult support:** School staff can intentionally give students their time, interest, attention, and emotional support.

2 - **Belonging to a positive peer group:** School staff can help students find positive peer groups that they can identify with.

3 - **Commitment to education:** School staff can help foster each student’s personal commitment to education by using effective classroom management and teaching methods, as well as providing students with the skills necessary to be engaged in school.

4 - **School climate:** School staff can help create a safe, caring, supportive environment where students feel connected by providing students with opportunities to have a voice and to participate in positive activities.



FOLLOW-UP ON THE 2022 UTAH LEGISLATIVE SES- SION

2022 Utah Legisla-
tive Session

- ◆ [Utah State Legis-
lature website](#)
- ◆ [USBE webpage
for the Utah Leg-
islative Session](#)
- ◆ [2022 Education
Bill Tracking
Document](#)

CONTACT US

[Safe and Healthy
Schools Team
Contact Us page](#)

[Prevention Team
Contact Us page](#)

TRAININGS

Visit the [Events and
Trainings](#) page to get
details on upcoming
training opportuni-
ties.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

- ◆ *How to Protect Yourself and Others from Illness* (BettySue Hinkson, UDOH; Kendra Muir, USBE)
- ◆ *Informing Stakeholders Regarding School Safety Protocols* (Rhett Larsen, USBE)
- ◆ *The Importance of School Counseling* (Bethany Marker, USBE)
- ◆ *Maintaining a Safe and Welcoming Environment* (Ashley Lower, USBE)
- ◆ *Building Connections in Schools* (Clarissa Stebbing, USBE)
- ◆ *School-based Mental Health Screenings* (Tiana McCall, USBE)



SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

USBE places a high priority on the mental health and well-being of students in our communities. Mental health influences the ability to cope with stress, overcome challenges, build relationships, and more. Below are things to consider as your LEA implements school-based mental health (SBMH) screenings.

- Interested in screening?
 - Complete the Notice of Intent form (opening soon) by **May 1, 2022**. The form is required every year in order to conduct screenings.
- Already screening?
 - Data reporting will begin in June.
- Extra support needed?
 - The SBMH Screening Grant is available for LEAs wanting to implement screening programs. It can also be used for mental health service support, including reimbursement for qualifying parents.

For more information, visit <https://www.schools.utah.gov/safehealthyschools/programs/sbmhsp>.

If you have questions regarding school-based mental health screenings, contact [Michelle Knight](mailto:michelle.knight@schools.utah.gov) (michelle.knight@schools.utah.gov).



utah department of
human services
SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH