

**Mental Health Services in Higher Education**

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Jen Plumb**

House Sponsor:

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**LONG TITLE****General Description:**

This bill creates the Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- defines terms;
- creates the Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program;
- requires the Utah Board of Higher Education to:
  - administer the program;
  - approve training;
  - distribute funds; and
  - create rules;
- requires an institution to:
  - establish and implement the program; or
  - use the funds for other mental health services for students; and
- exempts a peer coach from liability for an act or failure to act under this section.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

This bill reallocates as an appropriation a revenue neutral amount of \$1,500,000 from the Income Tax Fund.

**Other Special Clauses:**

None

**Utah Code Sections Affected:****ENACTS:****53H-6-302**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

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*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section **53H-6-302** is enacted to read:

**53H-6-302 . Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program -- Creation -- Purpose.**

- (1) As used in this section:
- (a)(i) "Peer coach" means a trained student who volunteers to provide non-clinical, peer-to-peer mental health support to another student.
- (ii) "Peer coach" does not mean a licensed mental health professional.
- (b) "Program" means the Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program created in Subsection (2).
- (c) "Student" means an individual enrolled at an institution.
- (2) There is created the Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program to:
- (a) foster positive mental health among students on institution campuses;
- (b) provide a student with mental health support from trained peer coaches, including the support listed in Subsection (6)(a); and
- (c) provide wellness resources to manage personal, academic, and emotional challenges.
- (3) The board shall:
- (a) administer and oversee the program;
- (b) review and approve the training for a peer coach described in Subsection (5)(a);
- (c) create standards for the program, regarding:
- (i) the program's outcomes and goals;
- (ii) identifying and referring a student in need of professional help to a licensed mental health professional; and
- (iii) reporting requirements for a peer coach;
- (d) subject to legislative appropriations, distribute funds to each institution to support the program at the institution; and
- (e) make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, to implement the requirements of this section.
- (4) An institution that receives funds from the board described in Subsection (3)(d) shall:
- (a) establish and implement the program created in this section; or
- (b) use the funds to provide other mental health services to students on the institution's campus.
- (5) An institution that elects to implement the program in accordance with Subsection (4)(a) shall:
- (a) create and provide training to a student that volunteers to become a peer coach; and
- (b) ensure that a student completes the training before providing support as a peer coach.
- (6) A peer coach:
- (a) may provide support to a student through:
- (i) coaching;

- (ii) mentoring;
- (iii) counseling;
- (iv) assisting with personal, academic, or emotional challenges;
- (v) accessing campus resources; and
- (vi) advising the student seek professional care when appropriate; and
- (b) may not:
  - (i) diagnose a student; or
  - (ii) provide clinical therapy to a student.

(7) This section does not:

- (a) create a cause of action against a peer coach for an act or failure to act under this section;
- (b) waive governmental immunity in accordance with Section 63G-7-201;
- (c) create or expand liability for an institution; or
- (d) create an employment relationship between a peer coach and an institution.

**Section 2. FY 2027 Appropriations.**

The following sums of money are appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. These are additions to amounts previously appropriated for fiscal year 2027.

**Subsection 2(a). Operating and Capital Budgets**

Under the terms and conditions of Title 63J, Chapter 1, Budgetary Procedures Act, the Legislature appropriates the following sums of money from the funds or accounts indicated for the use and support of the government of the state of Utah.

**ITEM 1 To Utah Board of Higher Education - Administration**

From Income Tax Fund	(1,500,000)
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Schedule of Programs:

Pass Through Funding	(1,500,000)
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**ITEM 2 To Utah Board of Higher Education - Student Support**

From Income Tax Fund	1,500,000
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Schedule of Programs:

Peer-to-Peer Counseling	1,500,000
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**Section 3. Effective Date.**

This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.