

H.B. 0337 Child Mental Health Amendments of 2021

“Every city and town in Utah deserve to have access to specialists ready and able to meet the needs of young children with emotional and behavioral challenges. With early intervention comes less childhood mental illness, less stress on the family, better performance in school and, frankly, happier childhoods. This bill goes a long way towards increasing that access and local support for all Utahns.”

*- Brooks Keeshin, MD Child Psychiatrist,
Primary Children’s Center for Safe and Healthy Families*



- Based on a range of estimates from national studies, as many as 1 in 5 (up to 91,600) of Utah’s children between the ages of 0-8 may experience mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral challenges.¹
- A recent study by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute highlighted the importance of early childhood mental health and identified specific needs within the state of Utah.
- One key point is that there are significant gaps in availability of mental health programs across the state.
- While there is an array of programs that support early childhood mental health, there is a lack of knowledge among many early childhood providers about early childhood mental health and the benefits of addressing mental health needs upstream.
- This legislation would help close identified gaps by creating a workforce development grant in the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to provide specialized education and training to all early childhood providers regarding evidence-based best practices for delivery of mental health support and interventions during early childhood.
- This legislation increases service capacity for young children throughout the state, allowing for greater access to care during this critical time of social-emotional development, preventing future excessive health care services, lost workforce, and criminal justice costs.



¹ Estimates shown are from national studies completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (2017-2018); Brauner C.B., Stephens CB. (2006); Cree R.A., Bitsko R.H., Robinson L.R., et al. (2016).