

# HOMELESSNESS POLICIES IN UTAH

Explanation of Code Blue, Code Red, Winter  
Response Plans, Funding Formula, and Central  
Campus Model

## Abstract

The Office of Homeless Services has a range of policies designed to address the increasing needs of homeless populations throughout the state. Code Blue, Code Red, and Winter Response Plans specifically aim to work with homeless individuals during extreme weather events in specific counties. The State Funding Formula is designed to equitably distribute funds throughout the state, and the new Main Campus Shelter Model is a new effort by the Homeless Services Board to redesign how Utah addresses homelessness.

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## Introduction

### KEY FINDINGS

- Since 2021, the Office of Homeless Services (OHS) and the State Homeless Coordinator (coordinator) implement state-level policy and coordinate state and federal requirements.
- In 2023, the Legislature created “Code Blue Alerts” to reduce injury and death among homeless individuals during extreme winter weather, and in 2025, a failed bill would have created an accompanying “Code Red Alert” for extreme summer weather.
- In 2023, the existing “Overflow Plan” was amended to be “Winter Response Plans,” which now apply to counties of the second class. The plans require counties to show they are meeting the requisite needs of homeless people in that county.
- In 2023, the Legislature tasked the Utah Homeless Network Steering Committee with creating a funding formula to equitably distribute state funds to providers.
- In 2024, the Utah Homeless Services Board voted to transition Utah’s response from a “scattered shelter” model with multiple, smaller shelters, toward a “main campus model” with one large shelter with support services, and the small shelters serving as “satellite” campuses.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the primary homeless services provider for the federal government. HUD divides states into Continuum of Care (CoC) to distribute federal funds and administer federal policies. Utah has three CoC’s: Salt Lake County, Mountainland (Summit, Wasatch, and Utah Counties), and Balance of State.

In 2021, the Legislature established the Office of Homeless Services (OHS) with a State Homeless Coordinator (coordinator) to serve as the chief executive officer of OHS. OHS implements state-level policy and coordinates them with federal-level policy. To meet the state’s goals, OHS divided the CoCs into 13 “Local Homeless Councils” (LHC) to assist with regional planning and program implementation. The “Utah Homeless Network” is a state-wide network for representatives of the 13 LHCs.

The state has a range of policies designed to address the needs of the homeless population. This brief will discuss four of these policies. In 2023, the Legislature established “Code Blue Alerts” during periods of extreme cold to reduce injury and death. Additionally, the legislature re-named “Overflow Plans” to “Winter Response Plans” and required counties of the second class to submit them. Moreover, the Utah Homeless Network Steering Committee was tasked with creating a “funding formula” to equitably distribute state funds to providers.

Finally, in 2024, the Utah Homeless Services Board voted to transition Utah’s shelter system into a “main campus model.”



## Code Blue

### Summary

[H.B. 499](#) from General Session 2023 established “Code Blue Alert” in Utah Code Title 35A, Chapter 16, Part 7 “Code Blue Alert.” These alerts from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) allow temporary increased shelter capacity during extremely cold weather to reduce serious injury and death among the homeless and unsheltered population.

### When is Code Blue Alert issued

DHHS monitors forecast data provided by the National Weather Service (NWS). **When NWS predicts temperatures of 18°F or below, including windchill, for two hours** or longer in an area in the upcoming 24 to 48 hours, DHHS will administer a Code Blue Alert to affected counties.

Affected counties may only be counties of the first, second, third, or fourth class.

### What is included in a Code Blue Alert

DHHS will alert the public, homeless shelters in affected counties, local government entities in affected counties, the OHS, and other relevant entities.

The alert will include the duration of the Code Blue Alert, affected county or counties, location and availability of resources and services for homeless individuals, and other relevant information.

### Code Blue Provisions

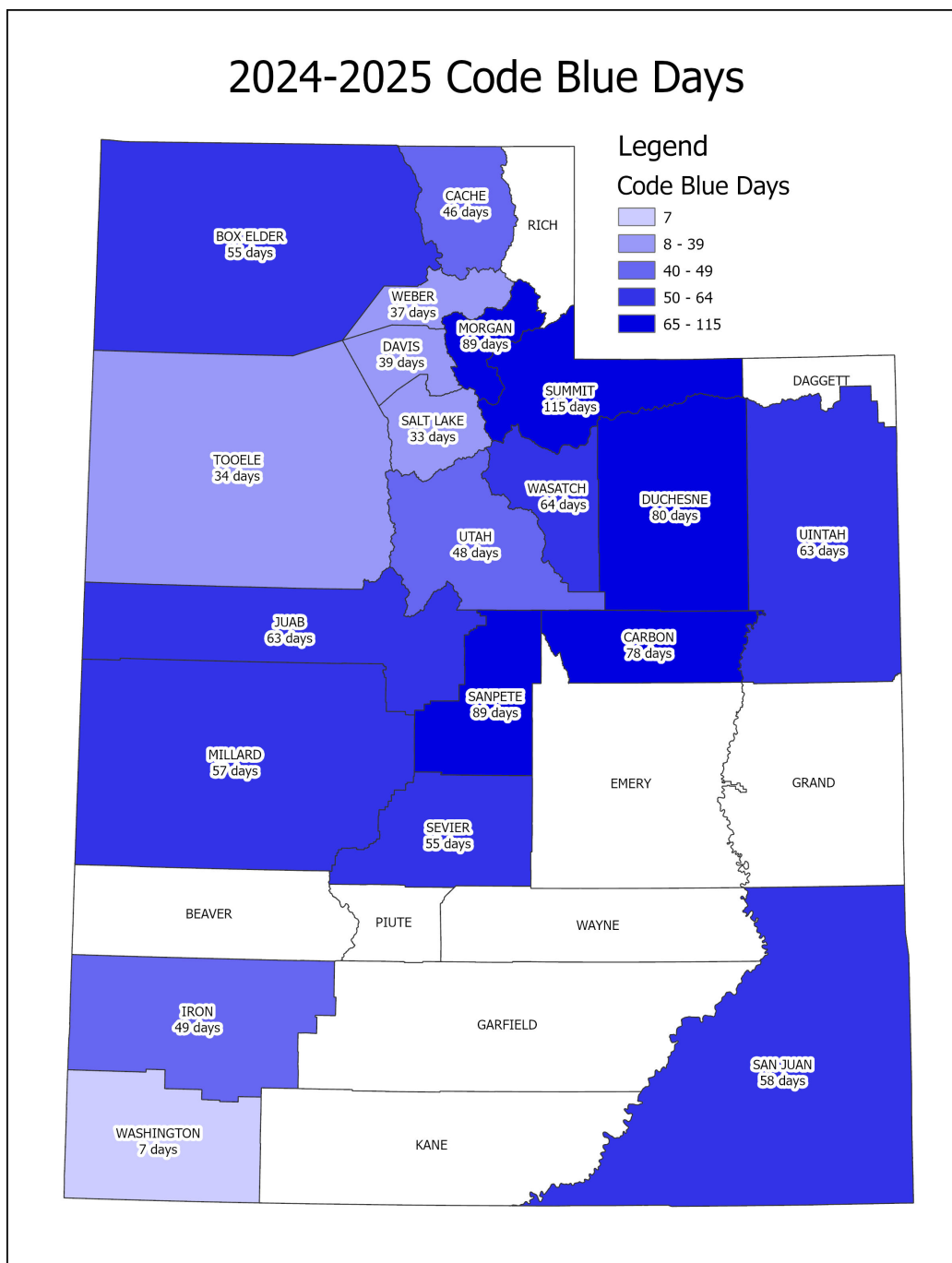
During a Code Blue event, the following provisions<sup>i</sup> take effect for the duration of the code blue alert:

1. Homeless shelters may expand capacity by up to 35%
2. Homeless shelters shall implement expedited intake procedures
3. Indoor facilities that are not homeless shelters may be used to provide temporary shelter and are exempt from licensure requirements
4. Entities may distribute cold-weather resources such as clothing items and blankets
5. Municipalities still enforce no-camping ordinances during a code blue event, but may not seize personal items such as clothing, blankets, tents, and sleeping bags

Figure 1 shows the number of Code Blue days, by county from October 15, 2024, through April 30, 2025. The Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel (OLRGC) generated Figure 1 using data from the Department of Workforce Services.



**Figure 1: Number of Code Blue Days, by county, 2024-2025**



Source: End Utah Homelessness, "[Code Blue 2024-2025](#)", End Utah Homelessness, August 22, 2025.

Counties of the Fifth (Beaver, Emery, Garfield, Grand, and Kane counties) and Sixth (Daggett, Piute, Rich, and Wayne counties) do not have Code Blue Alerts.



## Code Red

### Summary

During the 2025 General Session, [S.B.182](#) would have created a complementary “Code Red Alert” system during the summer months. The bill did not pass.

Like Code Blue, Code Red would have required the DHHS to monitor NWS forecasts from June 1 through September 30. DHHS monitors the HeatRisk and would administer a Code Red Alert if the HeatRisk score is 3 or above.

### HeatRisk Scores

NWS HeatRisk Scores rely on data from weather stations located throughout the state. The scores are based on multiple indicators, including temperature, time of year, and duration of elevated heat. The scores range from 0 to 4 and suggest the impact of the weather on human health. HeatRisk 3 – Major means the weather “affects anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems and industries.”

A Code Red Alert would have included the same information as a Code Blue Alert.

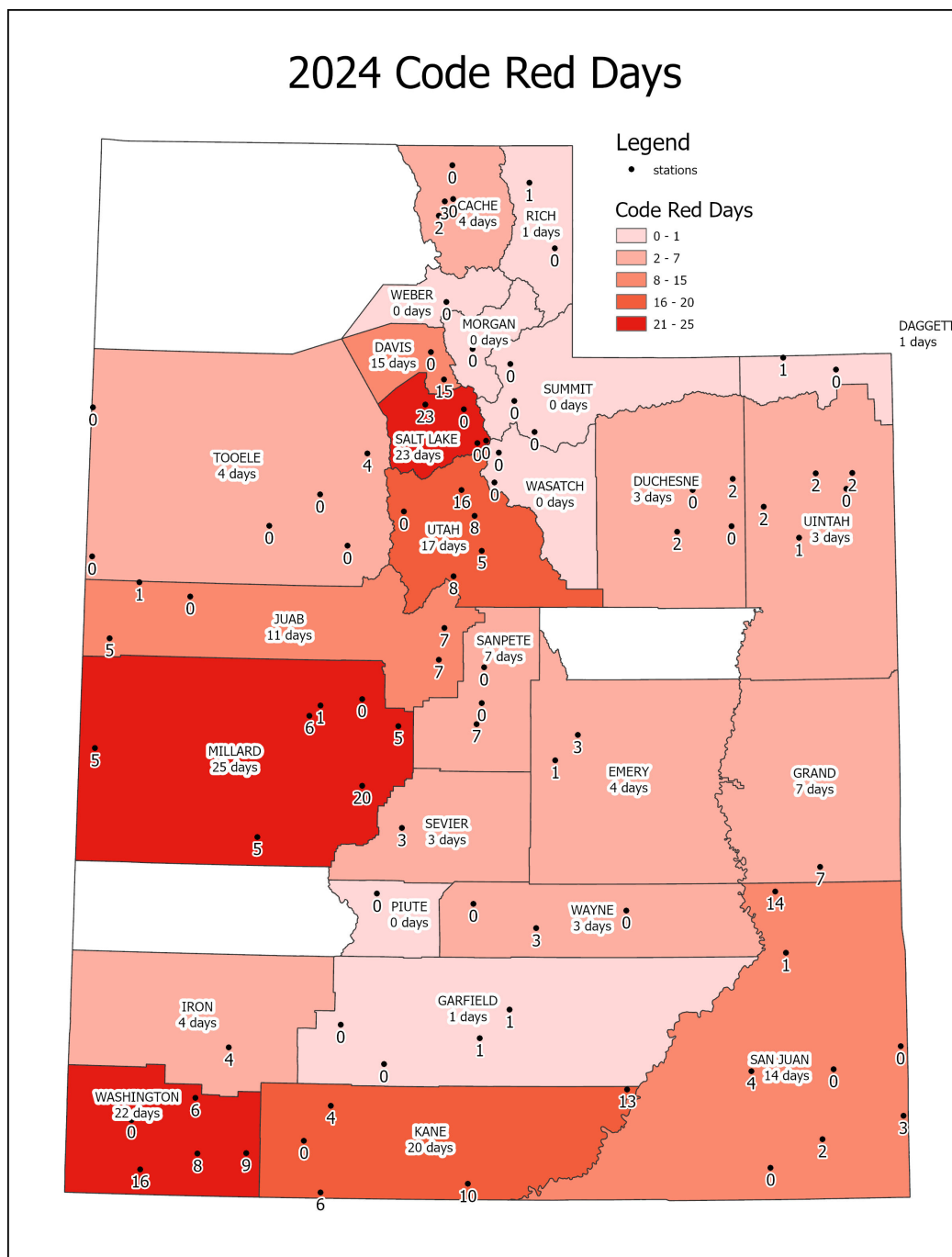
### Code Red Provisions

Code Red provisions would have been the same as Code Blue, except entities may have coordinated street efforts to distribute resources for survival in hot weather, including water, lightweight and light-colored clothing, hats, or sunscreen.

Figure 2 on the following page uses HeatRisk<sup>ii</sup> data to show the number of Code Red alerts there could have been in 2024 in each county, if the alert program was in place. Beaver, Box Elder, and Carbon counties do not have any NWS weather station and therefore, there are no estimates available. While counties of the fifth (Beaver, Emery, Garfield, Grand, and Kane counties) and sixth (Dagget, Piute, Rich, and Wayne counties) classes are included on the map, S.B. 182 excluded them from Code Red Alerts.



**Figure 2: Number of Hypothetical Code Red Days, by County, 2024**



Source: National Weather Service, "[105 Degree and HeatRisk Historical Data](#)", and National Weather Service, "[Experimental HeatRisk Data](#)", NWS, August 22, 2025.

Counties of the Fifth (Beaver, Emery, Garfield, Grand, and Kane counties) and Sixth (Daggett, Piute, Rich, and Wayne counties) would not have Code Red Alerts.



# Winter Response Plans

## Summary

Utah Code Title 35A, Chapter 16, Part 5 Winter Response Plan Requirements requires counties of the first (Salt Lake) and second (Davis, Utah, Washington, Weber) classes to submit a plan to meet the needs of their homeless population from October 15 to April 30.

## Who prepares a Winter Response Plan

Each applicable county must create a task force to advise and make recommendations to the Homeless Services Board during the winter response period and prepare and submit a winter response plan for the county.

For Salt Lake County, the task force voting members consists of the chief executive officers (or designees) of Salt Lake County, Draper, Midvale, Millcreek, Murray, Salt Lake City, Sandy, South Jordan, South Salt Lake, Taylorsville, West Jordan, West Valley City, and two other municipalities.

For counties of the second class (Davis, Utah, Washington, and Weber), the task force voting members include an officer of the county and the chief executive officer (or designee) of municipalities within the county.

Each task force must have at least seven nonvoting members: the state homeless coordinator, a representative of the Utah Association of Counties, an individual with lived experience with homelessness, two representatives of the local homeless council, one public safety representative, and any other individual appointed by the council of governments.

## Winter Response Plan contents

Winter Response Plans will include:

1. Plans to meet the requisite need during the subsequent winter response period
2. Assurances that any temporary winter response shelter meets all local zoning requirements
3. Detailed transportation plan, budget, and revenue sources to achieve compliance
4. Detailed county plan for a code blue event

Salt Lake County was required to submit a winter response plan on or before August 1, 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Counties of the second class were required to submit a winter response plan on or before August 1, 2024, and 2025.

## Exceptions

Counties of the second class may be exempt from submitting a winter response plan if they have both:

- A plan to address the needs of homeless individuals throughout the year
- A plan for code blue events



# State Funding and the Funding Formula

## Summary

During the 2023 General Session, the legislature passed [H.B.394](#), which created the homeless services funding formula in Utah Code Title 35A, Chapter 16, Part 2, Section 211, "Funding formula."

The formula is meant to distribute state funds across providers equitably. Federal funds not subject to other requirements, as determined by HUD, are also included in the funding formula.

## Who creates the formula

The Utah Homeless Network Steering Committee developed the formula which is then subject to final approval by the Homeless Services Board.

## The formula

For fiscal years 2025 through 2027, approximately \$29 million will be distributed to LHCs according to the [approved funding formula](#):

- 40% of the funding is based on the LHC's unsheltered and sheltered point-in-time data
- 50% of funding is based on the LHC's housing inventory count (HIC) data
- 10% of the funding is based on local poverty data.

| LHC          | Formula Portion |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Bear River   | \$1,083,779     |
| Carbon/Emery | \$191,853       |
| Davis        | \$543,702       |
| Grand        | \$169,489       |
| Iron         | \$517,701       |
| Mountainland | \$1,991,143     |
| Salt Lake    | \$19,652,698    |
| San Juan     | \$167,327       |
| Six County   | \$316,678       |
| Tooele       | \$346,961       |
| Uintah       | \$266,782       |
| Washington   | \$1,156,780     |
| Weber        | \$2,731,912     |
| Total        | \$29,136,804    |

Figure 3 shows the dollar amount awarded to each LHC based on the approved funding formula for fiscal years 2025-2027.

Figure 4 is a map of the three CoCs in Utah and the LHCs within each CoC. The Salt Lake County CoC has one LHC comprised of Salt Lake County; Mountainland CoC has one LHC comprised of Summit, Utah, and Wasatch counties; the Balance of State CoC divides the remaining 25 counties into eleven LHCs.

## Figure 3: Distribution of state funds to Local Homeless Councils

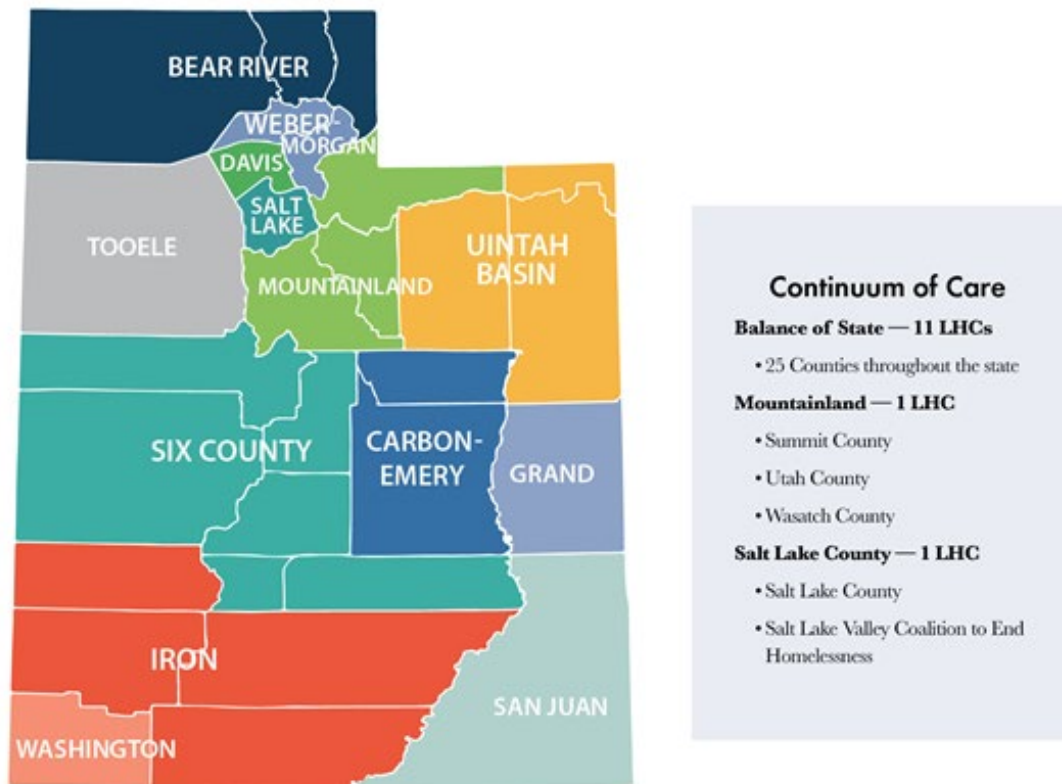
Source: Utah Office of Homelessness, "[FY25-FY27 State Homeless Funding \(SHF\) Request for Grant Application Process \(RFGA\)](#)", OHS, February 8, 2024.

## Glossary:

- **Continuum of Care (CoC)** – geographical unit created by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- **Local Homeless Councils (LHC)** – geographical unit created by the Utah Homeless Network to serve as local oversight bodies. There are 13 LHCs.
- **Utah Homeless Network (UHN)** – is a statewide network of representatives from each LHC, created in the Utah Strategic Plan on Homelessness in 2019.
- **Point-in-time (PIT) count** – is an annual survey count of the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people on a single night in the last ten nights of January. HUD requires each CoC to conduct a PIT count.



**Figure 4: Map of Local Homeless Councils and Continuums of Care**



Source: Utah Office of Homelessness, "[\*State Organization for Homeless Services\*](#)", OHS, August 25, 2025.<sup>iii</sup>



# Transformative Centralized Campus

## Summary

Homelessness is rising in Utah. According to [OHS](#),<sup>iv</sup> the number of homeless individuals rose from 2024 to 2025. The annual PIT found an 18% increase from 3,869 homeless individuals in 2024, to 4,584 homeless individuals in 2025. OHS reported a 5% increase in the number of homeless individuals during the PIT from 2023 to 2024.<sup>v</sup>

In response to the increase demand for services, the Utah Homeless Services Board (Board) [voted](#)<sup>vi</sup> to re-design the Utah shelter system and build a “transformative centralized campus.” The board is the governing board of OHS and its duties include approving the funding formula, the budget, and strategic plan.<sup>vii</sup> The “transformative centralized campus” shelter is intended to include comprehensive services such as emergency shelter, residential and in-patient treatment, case management, healthcare, food, vocational training, and employment services.<sup>viii</sup>

## The plan

Currently, the board closes its meeting to the public when it discusses the campus. As a result, there is no public record or information on progress toward the timeline.

- December 15, 2024: the OHS identifies three potential physical locations of at least 30 acres to the Board.
- January 15, 2025: OHS presents a master plan to the Board with programmatic and structural schematics, costs, best practices, and definitions of success outcomes
- October 1, 2025: the shelter is built
- Ongoing: OHS outlines the continued roles and responsibilities of the existing resource centers

## September update

As of September 3, 2025, OHS has a contractual agreement to acquire nearly 16 acres of land at 2520 N 2200 West, Salt Lake City.<sup>ix</sup> The site will have approximately 1,300-bed shelter along with supportive services. Environmental studies are ongoing, and next steps include securing funding partnerships and engaging with stakeholders. The campus is anticipated to begin operations in 2027.

## Conclusion

Homeless services and funding are a complicated web of federal and state policies. The Office of Homeless Services and the State Homeless Coordinator navigate, coordinate, and implement these policies. Code Blue and Winter Response Plans are state policies designed to meet the needs of homeless people during extreme weather. The state funding formula equitably distributes state funds among the Local Homeless Councils. Finally, the “transformative centralized campus” model is re-designing the Utah shelter system to better support homeless people year-round.



## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Utah Code Title 35A, Chapter 16, Part 7, Section 703, “Provisions in effect for duration of code blue alert.” <https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title35A/Chapter16/35A-16-S703.html>

<sup>ii</sup> LRGC generated Figure 2 using data sets from the NWS. The data has several limitations. First, the data is incomplete with three counties not having any weather stations and therefore no estimates. Second, one data set has weather station locations inconsistent with actual borders – one weather station “Bountiful Bench COOP” is in Weber County. Third, weather station locations may not be indicative of conditions at population centers – Pineview Dam is the only weather station in Weber County, but weather conditions are not necessarily consistent with weather in major population centers (Ogden).

<sup>iii</sup> Balance of State CoC divides 25 counties into 11 LHCs:

1. Bear River LHC is comprised of Box Elder, Cache, and Rich counties
2. Weber-Morgan LHC is comprised of Weber and Morgan counties
3. Davis LHC is comprised of Davis County
4. Tooele LHC is comprised of Tooele County
5. Uintah Basin LHC consists of Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah counties
6. Six County LHC is comprised of Juab, Millard, Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, and Wayne counties
7. Iron LHC is comprised of Beaver, Iron, Garfield, and Kane counties
8. Washington LHC is comprised of Washington County
9. San Juan LHC is comprised of San Juan County
10. Grand LHC is comprised of Grand County
11. Carbon-Emery LHC is comprised of Carbon and Emery counties.

<sup>iv</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services, “2025 Annual Data Report: Key Findings.” <https://jobs.utah.gov/homelessness/hkey.pdf>.

<sup>v</sup> Utah Department of Workforce Services, “Annual Report 2024: Utah Department of Workforce Services.” <https://jobs.utah.gov/edo/annreport/annualreport2024.pdf>.

<sup>vi</sup> Utah Homeless Services Board, “Transformative, Centralized Campus Motion.” <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1180631.pdf>.

<sup>vii</sup> Utah Code Ann. § Title 35A, Chapter 16, Part 2, Section 205, “Duties of the board.” <https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title35A/Chapter16/35A-16-S205.html>.

<sup>viii</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services, “Reimagining Hope: A bold, Transformative Approach to Overcome Homelessness.” <https://homelesscampus.utah.gov/>.

<sup>ix</sup> Department of Workforce Services, “The Utah Office of Homeless Services and the Utah Homeless Services Bboard Announce a Contract to Acquire Land to Construct a State Homeless Campus.” September 4, 2025. <https://jobs.utah.gov/department/press/2025/090325.html>