

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING**
2 **IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT OF TRAUMATIC**
3 **CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES SURVIVORS**

4 2017 GENERAL SESSION

5 STATE OF UTAH

6 **Chief Sponsor: Edward H. Redd**

7 Senate Sponsor: _____

8
9 **LONG TITLE**

10 **General Description:**

11 This concurrent resolution encourages state officers, agencies, and employees to
12 promote interventions and practices to identify and treat child and adult survivors of
13 severe emotional trauma and other adverse childhood experiences using interventions
14 proven to help and develop resiliency in these survivors.

15 **Highlighted Provisions:**

16 This resolution:

- 17 ▶ highlights recent advances in understanding the impact of adverse childhood
- 18 experiences on an individual's future outcomes;
- 19 ▶ encourages state officers, agencies, and employees to become informed regarding
- 20 well-documented detrimental short-term and long-term impacts to children and
- 21 adults from serious traumatic childhood experiences; and
- 22 ▶ encourages state officers, agencies, and employees to implement evidence-based
- 23 interventions and practices that are proven to be successful in developing resiliency
- 24 in children and adults currently suffering from trauma-related disorders.

25 **Special Clauses:**

26 None

27



28 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

29 WHEREAS, there have been recent significant advances in neuroscience with increased
30 understanding of how emotional neglect and exposure to serious trauma affect the way children
31 perceive and interact with their world both during childhood and into adulthood;

32 WHEREAS, post-traumatic stress disorder and other trauma-related disorders in
33 children and adults can be caused both by exposure to a single severe traumatic incident or by
34 exposure to a cumulative series of serious traumatic events;

35 WHEREAS, such traumatic incidents and events include emotional and physical abuse
36 and neglect, sexual abuse, separation from or loss of a parent, serious injury or death of a
37 parent, exposure to family discord, domestic violence, parental mental illness, substance abuse,
38 criminal activity in the home, and other traumatic and nonnurturing experiences and
39 environments;

40 WHEREAS, abuse, neglect, and traumatic events compose part of what has been
41 described in the medical literature as "adverse childhood experiences" or "ACEs," and the
42 cumulative potential impact to a child who has a significant history of exposure to neglect and
43 trauma can be calculated using what is called an ACE score;

44 WHEREAS, it is now understood that significant exposure to severe traumatic events
45 as outlined above can negatively affect the neurobiology and anatomy of a child's developing
46 brain and result in a substantially impaired ability to absorb new information, develop healthy
47 coping skills, and adapt to life's challenges as the child becomes locked into a
48 "fight-flight-or-freeze" mode that becomes the child's and future adult's default approach when
49 interacting with the world around them;

50 WHEREAS, children and adults whose brains have been negatively affected by
51 exposure to severe or repeated serious trauma, often experience persistent and sometimes
52 overwhelming dysfunctional emotions of fear, anxiety, depression, hopelessness, and anger,
53 and may exhibit socially inappropriate labile and aggressive behaviors, or may exhibit socially
54 inappropriate emotional detachment and avoidance behaviors;

55 WHEREAS, these negative coping behaviors and dysfunctional emotions limit a
56 person's capacity to form healthy stable relationships, foster social capital, learn from
57 experiences and mistakes, set and achieve short and long-term goals, and succeed in
58 educational and vocational pursuits;

59 WHEREAS, in addition to the above negative outcomes, children and adults are more
60 likely to attempt to self medicate trauma-related "fight-flight-or-freeze" anxiety and emotional
61 dysfunction by using available substances such as tobacco, alcohol, prescription medications,
62 and street drugs, including heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, and cannabis;

63 WHEREAS, because of the cumulative adverse effects of the above negative outcomes
64 on their physical health and emotional and cognitive capabilities, children and adults affected
65 by severe traumatic events, despite their sincere and best efforts to succeed in life, are more
66 likely to:

- 67 1. perform poorly in school and other academic pursuits;
- 68 2. struggle with work performance and sustainable employment;
- 69 3. become chronically unemployed as adults, resulting in financial stress, reduced
70 quality of life, and increased risk of experiencing long-term disability, homelessness, and other
71 personal and family traumatic experiences;
- 72 4. become dependent on and addicted to tobacco, alcohol, prescription medications,
73 illicit drugs, and other substances;
- 74 5. become directly engaged with law enforcement and the criminal justice system;
- 75 6. suffer from significant mental illness including depression, psychosis, and severe
76 anxiety leading to suicides and attempted suicides that otherwise would not have occurred;
- 77 7. suffer from serious physical health problems with poor long-term outcomes that
78 otherwise would not have occurred;
- 79 8. engage in high-risk sexual behaviors as adolescents and adults, including onset of
80 sexual activity at an early age and multiple sexual partners, resulting in increased risks of
81 adolescent pregnancy and paternity, other unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted
82 diseases;
- 83 9. experience significant problems and failures in marriage and other intimate partner
84 relationships;
- 85 10. become victims or perpetrators of intimate partner violence as adults;
- 86 11. struggle, despite their sincere efforts, to provide a stable and nurturing environment
87 for their current and future children, resulting in increased likelihood of intergenerational
88 trauma and intergenerational poverty; and
- 89 12. face a life expectancy shortened by as many as 20 years when compared to average

90 life expectancy for adults who did not experience severe trauma as children;

91 WHEREAS, with an increase in understanding about the impacts of trauma has come
92 the development of evidence-based questionnaires that identify behaviors and health-related
93 disorders in children and adults that can be indicative of possible trauma-related exposures;

94 WHEREAS, using these questionnaires can provide the opportunity to identify and
95 refer a child or adult for appropriate additional evaluation and treatment;

96 WHEREAS, the mental health profession can effectively diagnose and treat
97 trauma-related disorders following evidence-based approaches that have been proven to be
98 successful;

99 WHEREAS, one example of a well-studied, highly effective and widely available
100 therapy is trauma-focused cognitive behavior therapy;

101 WHEREAS, with the increase in scientific understanding and ability to identify and
102 treat trauma-related disorders, there is great hope for thousands of Utah children and adults to
103 begin healing from the negative effects of adverse childhood experiences, develop resiliency,
104 and have brighter, more productive futures than was previously possible; and

105 WHEREAS, in order to maximize the potential for positive outcomes of
106 evidence-based interventions in the treatment of severe trauma, it is imperative that employees
107 of the state of Utah and other people who interface directly with vulnerable children and adults
108 become informed regarding the effects of trauma on the human brain and available screening
109 and assessment tools and treatment interventions that lead to increased resiliency in children
110 and adults who struggle in life as the result of trauma-related disorders:

111 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
112 Governor concurring therein, encourages all officers, agencies, and employees of the state of
113 Utah whose responsibilities include working with vulnerable children and adults, such as the
114 Utah State Board of Education, the Utah Department of Human Services, the Department of
115 Workforce Services, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Utah Department of
116 Corrections, to:

117 1. become informed regarding well-documented detrimental short-term and long-term
118 impacts to children and adults from serious traumatic childhood experiences as outlined above;
119 and

120 2. implement evidence-based interventions and practices that are proven to be

121 successful in developing resiliency in children and adults currently suffering from
122 trauma-related disorders to help them recover from their trauma and function at their full
123 capacity and potential in school, the workplace, and community, family, and interpersonal
124 relationships.

125 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Utah Board
126 of Education, the Utah Department of Human Services, the Department of Workforce Services,
127 the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Utah Department of Corrections, and all political
128 subdivisions of the state of Utah.

129 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to all nonprofit
130 agencies and other entities that contract with the state of Utah to provide services to vulnerable
131 children and adults.

Legislative Review Note
Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel