

USU Program Will Train Youth to Find Quality Mental Health Resources | CPD Blog

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Mental health resources have proliferated online and in apps. They can be a powerful tool for Utah's youth, particularly those who may live in rural areas or have other difficulties accessing mental health services.

And they are especially needed following a stressful year. Calls to the Statewide CrisisLine and the Statewide WarmLine at the Hunstman Mental Health Institute went up a [combined 48 percent](#) from March 2020 to March 2021.

But which digital resources are trustworthy?

A new project from the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University will help youth leaders know how to identify someone that might be experiencing a mental health issue and spot evidence-based resources to treat these issues.

"We're teaching them how to fish, not giving them a fish," said Dr. Ty Aller, a researcher in the Research and Training division of the CPD. Aller and Raechel Russo, the project coordinator, have developed a series of trainings that emphasize responding to people with mental health concerns or crises by increasing their mental health literacy. The training of adult leaders in the 4-H program began this month.

The next step targets youth leaders. "We are going to train the youth to start delivering the training to their peers," Aller said. Starting in July, Aller and his team will begin by showing young leaders in the 4-H program some teaching techniques. Then the young leaders will learn the mental health curriculum. Finally, they will co-teach their peers alongside an adult mentor.

The CPD team offers the training to other youth organizations in Utah, including church and community groups and organizations for people with disabilities. The training sessions are free.

"If we can train youth who can then go and train other youth, we'll be creating a mushrooming effect," Aller said.

Along the way, the CPD's team will evaluate its effectiveness through pre- and post-tests, while also asking youth what they found useful about the trainings. The program continues through June 2022, and it is funded through the Interagency Outreach and Training Initiative, a collaborative effort between the CPD and the Utah Coordinating Council for Persons with Disabilities.

To find out more, or to sign your youth organization up for the training, contact project coordinator [Raechel Russo](#).