



Spencer J. Cox

Governor

Declaration

Whereas, May is National Mental Health Awareness Month and as such presents an opportunity to focus on the complex mental health needs of all Utahns;

Whereas, it is appropriate that a time should be set apart each year for the thoughtful consideration of our children's mental health and well-being in order to raise awareness of the critical importance of positive mental health in the social and cognitive development of a child;

Whereas, addressing trauma and mental health concerns in early childhood through the provision of evidence-based treatments improves a child's resilience—and indeed that of the community—by mitigating negative long-term effects including school drop-out, unemployment, involvement with the criminal justice system, and loss of life to suicide, the leading cause of death for Utahns ages 10 to 17 in 2020;

Whereas, the state has in the last three years elevated the importance of positive mental health and brought to public attention the crucial importance of early intervention, the need for increased access to care, and the necessity of reducing barriers to service including cost and stigma;

Whereas, the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic raises an ongoing concern for the physical health of children and families throughout our state, as well as for the immediate and long-term mental health effects experienced uniquely by children due to isolation from school and church communities, disruption of family life, and economic concerns;

Whereas, mental health care providers such as The Children's Center Utah, in partnership with state government, private business, nonprofit, and individual philanthropic leaders face a shared responsibility to address the need for comprehensive, coordinated mental health services for children and families throughout the state;

Whereas, in October 2021, *Pediatricians, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists, and Children's Hospitals* declared a national emergency in children's mental health, and in December 2021 the Surgeon General issued an advisory on the youth mental health crisis—drawing attention to the reality and severity of the state of children's mental health in today's world; and,

Whereas, The Children's Center Utah, in partnership with the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, released a landmark study of the current mental health services for young children in our state—and subsequently convened a cross-sector working group of early childhood mental health experts and leaders to develop a pathway to improving early childhood mental health in Utah—which illuminates strategies and tactics for collaboration in the strengthening and furthering of mental health services for young children and families throughout Utah;

Now, Therefore, I, Spencer J. Cox, governor of the state of Utah, do hereby declare May 7, 2022, as

**Children's Mental Health Awareness Day in Utah**

Spencer J. Cox  
Governor