

UTAH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING AND ADVISORY COUNCIL (UBHPAC)

August 13th, 2025

Jules Martinez, Council Co-Chair
Javier H. Alegre, Council Co-Chair

Office of Substance Use and Mental Health
288 N 1460 W
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

Re: Utah Block Grant Application (DUNS #878593383)

Please allow this letter to serve as comments by the Utah Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council (UBHPAC, "the Council") on the Utah 2026 Combined MHBG/SABG Application Behavioral Health Assessment and Plan ("the Application") according to section 22 of the Application.

The Council supports the Application by the Utah Office of Substance Use and Mental Health (OSUMH) for funding from the Federal Block Grant for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder ("the Block Grant") services for the State of Utah. These funds are critical for providing needed behavioral health services for our most underserved, marginalized and diverse communities throughout the State of Utah.

The Council was given the opportunity to review the Application for FY2026/27. The Council members were alerted that the Application was available for their review and public comment, and all were asked to review it and give input or ask questions. The full Council met to review the Application in greater detail, get answers to questions, and vote in support of the Application. The Council generated this letter to be submitted with the Application. The letter was reviewed on 6/5/25, revised, and approved by the UBHPAC Executive Council on 8/12/25.

In addition to reviewing the Application, the Council worked closely with the Utah OSUMH staff this past year. Information and training from OSUMH this year has included the following.

1. OSUMH provided updates about the block grant application process, the state system of mental health and substance use services, and changes in state level policy and legislation that affect state spending and service provision.
2. OSUMH staff gave several presentations about the state and federal budget, including both State and Federal funding, broken down into mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) categories (including set aside requirements and with a distributions breakdown).
3. OSUMH staff coordinated a series of presentations from several organizations who had received funding from the block grant in the last year to the Council.

The Council appreciates the OSUMH's consistency in requesting community feedback and in their efforts to integrate community feedback, including through the UBHPAC. The Council has worked to compile recommendations for the Utah OSUMH in three main areas. These include Process:

working together with the Council, Infrastructure, and Direct Services.

"I'll speak now as someone who has experienced both severe mental health/illness issues as well as substance use/abuse. The trainings have been very beneficial to me in establishing a peer network. I was certified back in 2012 and most especially at my first training I experienced a great connection with peers who had similar concerns to mine, and began bonding. Since that time I have gone through other trainings... I have also volunteered from time to time. I've been involved in a couple peer run organizations. I attend CEU offerings locally as well as online. Those things have led to a really good journey of recovery that I am very grateful for. The Block Grants that fund 100% of training are so very beneficial."

-Jane Lepisto, CPSS

1. Process: Working Together With the Council

- a. The Council members appreciate all of the information and training provided by the Utah OSUMH (as outlined above) and request that they continue to provide ongoing training and engage in dialogue with the council about their work, especially in regard to recommendations from this council.
- b. The Council appreciates that the Utah OSUMH has worked with community-based organizations that represent our communities of color and other underrepresented and marginalized communities as partners in ongoing efforts to create a more equitable system that is more representative of the diversity in our state. The council recommends that the OSUMH sustain and expand the training and capacity building in people and organizations of color to continue to improve representation on the UBHPAC and other important spaces within the OSUMH.
- c. The Council strives to work together with OSUMH to support the work of Utah's new Behavioral Health Commission. The Council recommends that this include quarterly review of the Commission's goals and objectives, quarterly review of OSUMH's efforts to support the Commission and UBHPAC, participation by Council members on the Commission's subcommittees and workgroups, and feedback to the Commission at least twice annually.

2. Infrastructure

- a. The Council recommends that the Utah OSUMH invest in a more connected and organized infrastructure, especially for peer support services and recovery community organizations. This might include technical and financial assistance to support the development and maintenance of a centralized system for data collection, grants reporting, payroll, insurance, and other systems that could connect peer agencies state wide.
- b. The Council recommends that the Utah OSUMH find ways to collect and share more detailed, specific and accurate data about outcomes related to the behavioral health care system in Utah and find ways to enable community based agencies to participate and benefit from this process equitably.

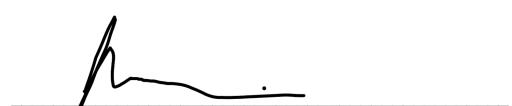
3. Direct Services

- a. The council appreciates many of the recent efforts that the Utah OSUMH has made to expand services to our most underserved populations. This includes through the expansion of peer-to-peer services through increased funding for community based recovery organizations, increased funding for agencies providing services to our immigrant and refugee communities, and increased funding for youth and prevention including in schools and for the prevention of alcohol and tobacco use. The Council appreciates the new focus on Forensic Peer Support training and services. We hope and encourage the OSUMH to continue to provide Block Grant funds for these groups and services.
- b. The Council recommends that the Utah OSUMH further support the expanding workforce, and especially the peer support workforce including expansion wherever needed, such as peer supervision, integrated healthcare, youth peer support certification, collegiate recovery programs, and others.
- c. The Council recommends increased focus on equitable access to services for people with disabilities including intellectual disabilities, communities of color, and youth. This should include mental health and substance use services accessible to the deaf and blind as well as people who speak languages other than English. The Council recommends that, when possible, these services be provided by Recovery Community Organizations who are seen as more accessible to the communities they serve than large behavioral health organizations.

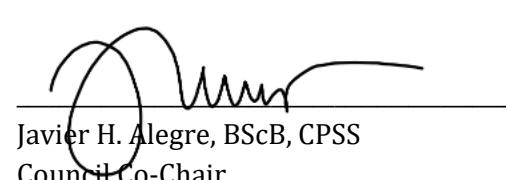
The Council appreciates the support from OSUMH staff and leadership, who have made strides in educating Council members and have created several opportunities and venues for the Council to give input to OSUMH in the past year. The Council looks forward to expanding our collaboration with OSUMH as we seek to continue to increase Council participation in the planning, development, and implementation of the Block Grant. In the upcoming year, we will continue to refine our process for working together with the Executive Council and OSUMH staff to plan, develop, and write the forthcoming SAMHSA Mental Health Block Grant application proposal.

We continue to look for ways to improve our collaboration and participation, impact, and value in improving consumer input of the Utah public health system. The Council is dedicated to being part of the process to elevate the behavioral health system and advocate for positive changes that will ultimately improve the lives of individuals and families in our communities.

Sincerely,



Jules Martinez, LCSW, CPSS
Council Co-Chair



Javier H. Alegre, BScB, CPSS
Council Co-Chair