

# What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



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## What Sanpete County Leaders and Residents Can Do To Strengthen the Impact of Girls and Women in Their Area

**UTAH** WOMEN &  
**LEADERSHIP**  
Project

Sanpete County is full of engaged, passionate individuals who frequently ask the question, "What can I do to strengthen the impact of girls and women in this area?" To provide specific answers to that question, the **Utah Women & Leadership Project** (UWLP) in conjunction with USU Statewide - Ephraim hosted a think tank at Snow College to collect ideas for individuals, groups, and organizations interested in supporting and empowering girls and women in their area.

This idea sheet is based on a 2024 gathering of 33 leaders and residents in Sanpete County. Girls and women face challenges unique to the area in which they live, and the goal of this gathering was to identify those barriers and determine strategies and initiatives that local leaders and residents can implement to address them. This document includes recommendations in the following areas: education, home and family, government and business, mental health and physical safety, and culture.

### EDUCATION

Leaders in Sanpete County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. They recognize the important difference graduating from college makes in a woman's life. Recommendations for schools and the community include:

- Educate the educators about the issues facing their students so they can support them.
- Emphasize self-worth and possibilities for their future to girls at a younger age.
- Ensure everyone has access to higher education.
- Inform girls and women about various options post high school, including different education pathways, whether vocational or a graduate degree.
- Make sure finances are not a hinderance to higher education. Inform girls and women about financial assistance options as education costs less than buying a new car and is an investment in themselves.
- Provide mentors and examples to girls and expose girls to successful women.

### HOME & FAMILY

In Sanpete County, parents are recognized as one of the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. Recommendations for parents and society include:

- Balance shared roles in the home as a model of healthy relationships.
- Demonstrate good communication by speaking up and communicating expectations.
- Educate about important issues and talk about hard topics.
- Empower daughters to self-advocate so they can stand up for themselves.
- Examine how we talk to our daughters and be sure to emphasize effort over appearance.
- Foster the idea that failure is only failure if you stop and that it is worth working for what is important.
- Help daughters know how to set boundaries they are comfortable with, including identifying, understanding, communicating, and enforcing those boundaries with others.
- Incorporate school curriculum that is supported at home, so it is interactive.
- Inform parents about support available to them in the community.
- Provide parenting classes, including teaching the value of positive praise and effort.
- Shift from old ways of thinking so families thrive and don't just survive.

## GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS

The importance of involving girls and women in civic activities in Sanpete County, as well as supporting them in the workplace, emerged as primary themes. Recommendations for government and business include:

- Advocate for women to run for political office and support them once they are elected.
- Eliminate the gender pay gap in workplaces across the county.
- Empower women in their careers and allow flexibility with family and career roles. One size does not fit all.
- Incorporate family-friendly practices and initiatives that support women in businesses so they will spread to the broader society (trickle effect).
- Promote good childcare options with adequate compensation for childcare providers.

## MENTAL HEALTH & PHYSICAL SAFETY

Concern over the mental health and physical safety of girls and women in Sanpete County emerged as primary themes. Recommendations for healthcare and society include:

- Be open and vulnerable about personal struggles so others know it is normal to struggle.
- Challenge the harmful effects of social media by helping girls and women know it is not reality and does not give a full view.
- Combat social media influencing and the impact of unrealistic expectations.
- Develop a community plan of action to help children and adults beginning with socialization, nutrition/health, mental health, and dealing with anxiety.
- Establish better physical and mental health resources and educate residents about the available resources.
- Have emotional regulation education, including how to manage and respond to emotional experiences in appropriate and adaptive ways.
- Foster a strength perspective to overcome and not just survive obstacles, and be able to thrive.
- Incorporate both how to handle struggles, as well as how to support those who are struggling, in approaching overcoming challenges.
- Inspire skills and educate girls and women that failures are okay and a normal part of life.
- Make a safe and open environment for reporting assault and harassment, starting with elementary age or younger, with an emphasis on the importance of reporting.
- Offer consent education for kids. Have a locally produced video with kids' voices for ages 12 and up. Include *My Body* maturation reports.
- Provide child abuse prevention and education with earlier intervention. Focus on prevention instead of cure with programs related to awareness, empowerment, and application. Sex education is an important part of prevention as it helps protect youth and provides terminology to use.
- Support those who have been abused by educating them and their supporters.

## CULTURE

The think tank attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Sanpete County has a significant impact. Leaders are concerned about the limitations and decreased value culture has placed on women and girls. Recommendations include:

- Bring Utah's poor record with women and girls to the public's attention. Use statistics to educate as a starting point so there is a basis in reality and common ground.
- Call out issues by including information in mailers and doing outreach using natural youth leaders. Take advantage of existing social opportunities such as sports events to reach the public.
- Create positive social media with a call to action.
- Develop engaging incentives and use existing clubs and organizations to help spread messaging of self-awareness.
- Eliminate the disparate appearance standards between genders with impossible expectations and pressure for girls and women to look a certain way.
- Embrace a tiered approach to influencing change within the community.
- Establish monthly local think tanks.
- Get comfortable with uncomfortable conversations to unmask the problems. Do hard things as a community.
- Have conversations in many different areas with leaders from different groups.
- Identify misogyny, sexism, and bullying. Push back when necessary.
- Learn about prejudice that's hindering progress, with the goal to end bias in thought and action.
- Listen to, hear, and validate those with different life experiences.
- Prioritize an abundance mentality.
- Promote acceptance of diversity and celebrate the self.
- Spotlight the good and highlight excellence.
- Stop seeing difference as a threat. Seek diversity.
- Value community over competition. Make a collaborative environment and value individuals.

## CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Sanpete County, we will be better able to change harmful or ineffective policies and programs, continue effective action, support effective leaders, identify and solve local problems, and create responsive initiatives. The UWLP encourages leaders and residents to use this document to affect change.

