



**UPAN Newsletter** Volume 12 Number 5 | **MAY 2025**  
*“Empowerment and Growth Through Knowledge and Unity”*

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**Mother’s Day Wishes & the Impact & Challenges of Prison on Families & Mother’s in Prison –  
 Challenges of Mother’s Day for Mothers of Incarcerated – Mailing Volunteers Needed –  
 Incarceration’s Lasting Effects on Mental Health – Mental Health in Utah Prisons –  
 2025 Legislative Session Recap Part 1**

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**Next Meeting:** Monday May 12, 2025 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Guest Speaker **Channae Haller** of Justice by Objectives.  
*This will be an **IN PERSON meeting** at 141 East, 5600 South, Suite 300 Murray Utah 84107 & also live on Zoom.*

**Following Meeting:** Mon. June 9, 2025 zoom mtg: Mark Hugentobler speaking on the Freedom Scholars Academy

**NO Meeting in July!** *Join all meetings at* <https://bit.ly/UPAN-Meet>

*Meetings Available on UPAN Facebook Live and on UPAN’s Facebook page afterwards. Visit UPAN Facebook page for newsletters. Visit website (page 10) to subscribe to the UPAN Newsletter, or Utah Prisoner Advocate Facebook Page for link to current monthly meeting. Free to the public. Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/UPAN-Meet>*

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**Disclaimer:** *Formulate your own opinions about the information presented.*  
 This information is presented for the reader’s enlightenment and evaluation.

**“The influence of a mother in the lives of her children is beyond calculation.” —James E. Faust**

**Mother’s Day for Prison Families and Women Spending Mother’s Day in Prison or Jails**

by Molly Prince, LCSW

Each May, UPAN devotes an article for Mother’s Day to women impacted by incarceration. In the past we have focused on the mothers of the incarcerated, as well as incarcerated women who are mothers. A few years ago our Mother’s Day article focused on women (including

mothers) who make a difference in criminal justice reform. Another year we focused on mothers whose husbands and fathers of their children are incarcerated. This year, UPAN wants to try to encompass all mothers and women who take on the role of mothers who are touched by incarceration.

**Mother’s Day Wishes for Incarcerated Mothers**

**UPAN sends Mother’s Day thoughts and wishes to all mothers who are in prison or jail.**

- ♥ Wishing every mother who is incarcerated a day that brings good memories, even if bittersweet, of the good times with their loved ones.
- ♥ Wishing a day of peace and hope for the future.

- ♥ Hoping that all mothers in our prisons and jails have the ability to write a letter or send a card to their children as a way to emotionally connect with them.

- ♥ Hoping that mothers inside are receiving cards, letters, emails, pictures, or whatever form of communication is allowed, from their children.
- ♥ Wishing a day that includes a phone call home to talk

to your children, no matter what age they are.

- ♥ Hoping that all mothers can receive visits from their children, both young and adult, in the weeks around Mother's Day. These could be in person or on video.

***Mother's Day reminds us again that people behind bars are not nameless "offenders," but beloved family members and friends whose presence — and absence — matters.***

**"Families of prisoners are the forgotten victims." Alison Henderson**

### **The Impact of Incarceration on Mothers and Families**

by Molly Prince, LCSW

According to a KSL.com report by Amanda Dickenson in July 2023, there are an average of 400 women in the care and custody of the Utah Dept. of Corrections. Approximately 70% of them are parents of minor children based on information available at that time Trisha Reynolds, LCSW, Intergenerational Program Director for UDC.

While the percentage is smaller for fathers in prison, the number of parents in prison still affects one out of every 14 children nationally.

Dickenson's article states, "Being a mom is one of the most challenging roles any woman ever takes on. We worry about our kids when they're at school. We stress about how other kids are treating them. We're concerned that they're eating right and growing properly. Imagine the magnitude of that worry if you're a mom in prison and can't be with your kids when they wake up or put them to bed at night."

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, in 2021 nearly 150,000 incarcerated mothers nationwide spent Mother's Day apart from their children in the US. In US prisons, 58% of all women are mothers, as are 80% in jails, including many women who are incarcerated awaiting trial simply because they cannot afford bail.

**Most of incarcerated mothers were the primary caretakers of their children.** Incarceration rips children away from their source of security and support. While many women end up in prison, the majority of incarcerated women are in jails. Separation between mothers and their children is devastating on many levels. Many children are shunted into foster care, which means they are less likely to stay in contact with their mothers; to relatives who are not financially ready to take care of them; and sometimes in more fortunate situations, to loving relatives who can support their relationship with their imprisoned mother. It's been said, "When mothers are incarcerated, the whole family is incarcerated."

**The words of Utah mothers in prison.** The KSL article explains what mothers in USCF have said about how they feel about being away from their children. Utah's incarcerated moms say that the hardest part of prison is being away from their children.

Reynolds shared what moms in prison say about being apart from their children. She stated, "They all said the same thing... This is the most painful part of being incarcerated." The moms say, "We deserve to be here, but our children don't deserve this separation from us." One mom described not being with her children as feeling like "her heart is shattered inside of her chest."

**Incarcerated mothers' options to try to remain involved in their children's lives.** Like all moms, moms in prison have a wide range of how they interact with their children.

"Some of them have really positive relationships with their children and really frequent contact," Reynolds explained to Dickenson for the KSL report. "Many of them are involved in day-to-day parenting decisions with their child's caregiver through regular phone calls or visitation."

Letters are also an option, however the Pigeonly contract that launched in January of this year has proven terribly less than adequate in getting mail to mothers in prison from families in a timely manner.

#### **Limitations to using phones in Dell is being mitigated with the new Global Tel Link / ViaPath Getting Out contract with UDC for the women's side.**

Until April, the women in USCF have only had the option of phones on the unit. On April 9th, the Dell facility launched a **pilot project** using GTL ViaPath tablets and the Global Tel Link Gettingout.com website to sign up. Initially, this service will be available only at the Dell facility and not throughout the entire prison system. We hope that after a few months of testing to see how it all goes, that it might expand to the men's side of the prison.

This tablet program will allow users to send messages, receive photos, and facilitate video visits in addition to the prison sponsored visits and phone calls. It will be a service that is paid for by incarcerated and families.

**Cost.** Incarcerated mothers, their families or the child's caregivers must pay for those calls. Family members receiving the calls must deposit money on their phone account with an inmate calling service or incarcerated women will deposit money to their own calling accounts. Global Tel Link / Viapath is the provider in Utah's prisons. These calls are not cheap. The prison reports it attempts to keep the cost of the calls down, but they are about 11 cents a minute, which adds up quickly, particularly when mothers are attempting to stay in regular contact with their children.

One \$3.35 call for ½ hour per day can add up to \$24 a week, or \$100 a month.

Using the Getting Out tablet service through GTL / ViaPath in Dell, the video calls on the tablet currently cost 25 cents per minute, making a ½ hour video call cost \$7.50.

This is quite expensive for mothers who are only able to make between 40 cents and \$1.00 per hour, if they are fortunate to have one of the limited number of jobs available. It also puts a financial burden on the caregiver of the children.

The IPP jails have different service providers and their calls are generally more expensive across the board.

***People not involved in the prison life world do not realize how precious each of those minutes is and how quickly they pass.***

**Availability.** There are phones available in the sections to make calls on. But lockdowns, going to programming, other classes, or work, classification levels, and other factors can limit the opportunity incarcerated mothers have to use those phones. The children have their own school and activity schedules and are not always available to receive calls when moms are able to place those calls. It is a delicately balanced dance of scheduling and planning calls around everyone's schedule.

**Technical problems with phone calls.** As with all inmate calling services, Utah's phone system is not always user friendly. There are sometimes challenges logging on to make a call. There are also instances where it simply does not work. Calls may be cut off for no reason. Mom and child may not be able to hear each other. Sometimes there is static, other times it sounds like someone is talking underwater.

Incarcerated parents and children eventually learn to adapt, but having a parental relationship through the phone is significantly challenging.

***Both in-person and video visitation are available to mothers who have the privilege levels for it.***

Free video visits can be scheduled in advance by the family member coordinating through the UDC website. In-person visitation can be scheduled ahead as well. With the new tablet system, video calls can be made for a fee anytime someone is able to use their tablet.

Benefits of video visitation include the expanded opportunity to more families who live far away and would not otherwise be able to visit in person.

Drawbacks to video visitation have to do with the challenges of this technology not always working properly. This leads to frustration and sadness for both children and parents. Complaints that UPAN receives are that the prison video visits sometimes cut off and both parties must sign in again and are limited to 30

minutes each. Incarcerated parents must be escorted to the visiting room ahead of the time for the visit, and when there is miscommunication with staff, sometimes an inmate is not escorted to the visiting area. Or if someone's name that has a scheduled visit does not get put on the list sent to the housing unit the night before, they will lose that visit because they will not be escorted to the visit. In video visits, it is impossible to look at each other in the eye at the same time, which takes away from the visit.

***We have not received feedback on the quality of video and messaging in the Pilot Program using GTL/ViaPath tablets as of this article.***

***How incarceration and re-entry can harm mothers and their children.*** Beyond having to leave their children in someone else's care, prison moms are impacted by the brutal side effects of incarceration. These can include lack of necessary medical care as they age, the onset and/or exacerbation of mental health problems, increased risk of self-harm and suicide, and a higher likelihood of ending up homeless or deprived of essential financial benefits once they are released.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative (PPI), women who are pregnant when they are locked up have to contend with a healthcare system that frequently neglects and abuses patients in the prison systems across the US. Fortunately, in Utah's Dell Unit, there is a **Pregnant Mother's Unit** that offers a quiet and supportive housing approach to women who enter prison here while pregnant. They can remain in that unit until they give birth. They cannot bring their babies back to the prison with them from the hospital, but this has been a step forward in appropriate pre-natal care in a less stressful environment than the normal prison dorm. UPAN has not received complaints from those pregnant mothers about the medical care received, so it appears that this approach is working well.

**Challenges upon re-entry** await incarcerated mothers and pregnant women when they are released from jail or prison. Formerly incarcerated women experience extremely high rates of food insecurity, according to a 2019 study. PPI reports that in the US, the 1.9 million women released from prisons and jails every year have high rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness. There is a shortage of agencies and organizations able and willing to help formerly incarcerated women restart their lives.

**When we incarcerate women rather than offering them diversion and treatment alternatives, we inflict potentially irreparable damage to both them and their families.** The majority of women who are incarcerated would be better served through alternatives in their communities. So would their kids.

**Keeping parents out of jail and prison is critical to protect children from the known harms of parental incarceration, including:**

- Traumatic loss marked with feelings of social stigma and shame and trauma-related stress – this is also experienced by incarcerated parents.
- More mental health problems and elevated levels of anxiety, fear, loneliness, anger, and depression, and incarcerated mothers are also impacted by these problems.
- Less stability and greater likelihood of living with grandparents, family friends, or in foster care.
- Difficulty meeting basic needs for families with a member in prison or jail – and mothers trying to rebuild their lives after incarceration experience these same

areas of lack upon re-entry, which continues to impact their children.

- Lower educational achievement, impaired teacher-student relationships, and more problems with behavior, attention deficits, speech and language, and learning disabilities.
- Problems getting enough sleep and maintaining a healthy diet – for both children left behind and mothers in jail and prison.
- More mental and physical health problems later in life. This applies to both formerly incarcerated and children of incarcerated parents.

<https://kslnnewsradio.com/2044475/parents-in-prison-affect-one-in-14-children-heres-how-utah-helps/>  
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/05/mothers-day-2021/>

***“Incarceration punishes more than just individuals; entire families suffer the effects, long after a sentence ends.”*** Wendy Sawyer and Wanda Bertram

### **The Challenges of Mother’s Day for Mothers of the Incarcerated**

by Molly Prince, LCSW

Mother’s Day is difficult for mothers of the incarcerated, no matter how many Mother’s Days a mother of an incarcerated person experiences. Research shows that women are the primary supporters of incarcerated persons. This includes a large percentage of mothers.

Society has sympathy and empathy for mothers who have lost a child to illness or other types of loss. Society has sympathy for women who have lost their own mothers. *What is rarely acknowledged, discussed, or appreciated is the pain of mothers whose children, regardless of age, are incarcerated.* The pain of having a child in prison can be a complicated mixture of love, loss, mourning, guilt, anger, and anxiety.

An article on CNN.com in May 2018 by Karla Hodge and Jennifer R. Farmer entitled “What Mother’s Day Means for Mothers of Incarcerated Children” outlines three things they think parents of incarcerated children should remember. The next three paragraphs are an excerpt from that article.

**1. It’s OK to be happy.** They write, “When our sons were arrested, we struggled with whether it was appropriate to be happy. We thought we had to wait until they were released before we could exhale. We thought it was unjust for us to be free, enjoying life, while they were behind bars. One of our mothers told us that we had to live. It was a simple statement, but it is also true. A big part of living has been choosing to find and accept happiness. Our happiness cannot be dependent on another person, including our children. This is a journey -- but we are learning to give our children’s missteps back to them to carry. We’ve learned that our refusal to find peace and happiness doesn’t lighten their load, or ours.”

**2. Use resources and reach out to other parents of incarcerated children.** Hodge and Farmer write, “While

it may be tempting to isolate yourself, we have found tremendous encouragement in a community of others who have walked or are walking the path we’re on. In addition to personal networks, we recommend Parents with Incarcerated Children, a support group for parents, and a Facebook group called Mothers of Incarcerated Sons and Daughters. We also are active with campaigns that work to end mass incarceration in the United States such as LIVE FREE.” (UPAN’s Family Facebook group is a place mothers can find support from other parents.)

**3. Walking away is not an option.** Hodge and Farmer explain, “We’ve never been incarcerated but we’ve been told about how isolating an experience it can be. Some incarcerated individuals have no support system. One day, if they are released, no one will be there for them. We will not let this be the case for our children. We will not abandon our responsibility as mothers -- our sons will never age out of our families. Of course, not everyone feels the same way. Our sons’ poor choices have caused rifts in other familial relationships and we are hopeful those broken relationships can be restored. However, we are clear that walking away is not an option.”

Anyone who has had a loved one who is locked up knows that it takes strength and courage to walk the prison journey alongside them. It takes much soul searching and reflection on one’s deepest values to work through feelings about the choices our loved ones have made. That process is not always understood or fully appreciated by society - or even our incarcerated loved ones. I would like to acknowledge the depth of soul that it takes to accompany your daughter or son through incarceration. I would like to remind you that you are not forgotten.

***“Mother’s Day for mothers of incarcerated children is a day of remembrance. It is a day of gratitude for what was, sadness for what is, and eternal hope for what will be.”***

## **Volunteers Needed to Print & Mail UPAN Newsletters to Inmates**

Once again, **UPAN is seeking more volunteers to print out and mail our monthly newsletters to inmates in the Utah State Prison system** that do not have family or friends in the community to do so. This includes both prisons (USCF & CUCF) as well as IPP Jails that accept mail.

**UPAN is all volunteer.** We rely on the kindness and generosity of prison families and community members to help us print and mail newsletters to inmates who have no one else to do so. We have been publishing a monthly newsletter since June 2014. UPAN emails the newsletter to over 1,200 individuals that include family members and friends of incarcerated persons, interested community members, various community agencies, legislators and other elected and appointed government officials, corrections officials, and news reporters.

**UPAN asks that any incarcerated person who has family or friends in the community who can print and send the newsletter into them, to ask them to do so.** For inmates who have no one in the community to do this, UPAN has volunteers who generously donate their time and money to provide this service. UPAN currently has over 60 volunteers that print and mail monthly newsletters to over 400 state inmates who do not have family or friends to do this for them.

**Several of our long-time volunteers have had to either cut back on the number of people they mail to, or step back completely from this job in the past month.** Some newsletter volunteers are amazing committed people who have been doing this for 10 years at their own expense as postage has increased and the price of envelopes has risen.

This has left a waiting list for incarcerated persons who have no one on the outside to print and mail UPAN's monthly newsletter to them. We hope to be able to assign these folks to new Newsletter Mail Volunteers. ***It has been said that volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.***

**If you want to help,** please email and let us know how many individuals you wish to send newsletters to. Send to UPAN's inmate newsletter volunteer coordinator, [deon.corkins@utahprisoneradvocate.org](mailto:deon.corkins@utahprisoneradvocate.org)

**How it works.** The 10-page newsletter can be printed front and back on lightweight (20-lb.) printer or copy paper for a total of 5 printed sheets that will fit into one white #10 envelope for the cost of one Forever stamp. The newsletters are printed in black and white and mailed in a #10 white envelope. Do not use security

envelopes, some jails do not accept them. You will use UPAN's return address of: UPAN, PO Box 464, Draper, UT 84020 on newsletters that you mail in to inmates who are not your own loved ones. The newsletters are sent through the Pigeonly contract that UDC has for mail. We ask that you do this every month.

When addressing the envelope, it is important to list the prisoner's name AND offender number and the facility he / she is housed in with the facility code, if applicable. USCF is 1700 and CUCF is 1701. Any mail without the proper facility code and Inmate name and offender number will be returned. Or if the offender number does not match the name.

You will be assigned inmates to mail to based on the number of incarcerated recipients you have chosen to mail to.

If you volunteer to do this, our Inmate Newsletter Volunteer Coordinator, Deon Corkins, will assign you the number of inmates you have requested. She will send you an email with the recipient's name, offender number, and housing address of the people you are assigned. If you begin to send to additional inmates that are not on the UPAN list, we ask that you notify Deon of this so we do not duplicate efforts. Volunteers do this each month for their list of recipients until they notify UPAN that they no longer can volunteer in that position.

**Double checking addresses.** We ask that before mailing each month, you check the Offender Search on the UDC website, [www.corrections.utah.gov](http://www.corrections.utah.gov) to confirm that the housing / facility locations of your assigned recipients have not changed. The incarcerated are moved frequently, therefore this will reduce the amount of returned mail UPAN receives and eliminate Deon having to look up and re-send to those individuals who have been moved between the prisons and jails that house state inmates around the state. Volunteer mailers can check the locations of ten inmates in less than 5 minutes. Please do this, thanks.

For the past 11 years, UPAN has provided timely information to thousands of incarcerated and their families via the UPAN newsletter. We hope to continue providing newsletters to people who have no one out here to print and mail to them. **The tireless efforts of our newsletter mailing volunteers over the years has been the key to its success!**

Anyone can sign up to have the newsletter delivered electronically via email at [utahprisoneradvocate.org](http://utahprisoneradvocate.org).

***"Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." Attorney Bryan Stevenson***

***"When everything goes to hell, the people who stand by you without flinching — they are your family." Jim Butcher, author***

***"There are two kinds of guilt: the kind that drowns you until you're useless, and the kind that fires your soul to purpose." Sabaa Tahir, novelist***

## **The Lasting Effects of Incarceration on Mental Health**

By Maureen Parker RN, MSN, ARNP-BCR, UPAN Med Team

### **May is Mental Health Awareness Month.**

*This article was published in the October, 2022 UPAN newsletter, but it bears being reprinted here.*

It is well known that there are many people with mental illness who are in prisons and jails in the United States, but it is less well known that incarceration exacerbates mental illness and creates harm to one's mental health.

The experience of incarceration can damage mental health by isolating human beings and by taking away meaning and purpose in life. Additionally, the exposure to violence, the overcrowding and solitary confinement (Max) cause more damage to the psyche.

Post-Incarceration syndrome is like what is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of PTSD are hyper-vigilance, anxiety, depression, insomnia, avoidance, suicidal thoughts, flashbacks, and difficulty with emotional regulation. Both during incarceration and after release many people continue to suffer the effects of their incarceration, like war veterans. Those who are incarcerated suffer from their disconnection from family, friends, and society. They lose their autonomy, experience boredom, lack of purpose and live in unpredictable and violent surroundings.

Seymour L. Halleck, who has studied the effects of incarceration, reports that "The prison environment is almost diabolically conceived to force the offender to experience the pangs of what most psychiatrists would describe as mental illness." Depression is a common outcome while one is incarcerated and after release. Lack of social support and good family relationships contribute to this. Even those who routinely see family via visits are impacted. The prison environment makes it difficult for them to connect.

Women who are separated from their children are associated with feelings of guilt, anxiety, and fear of losing the mother-child attachment. Studies show that incarcerated mothers feel chronic distress, depression, and guilt.

Incarcerated people have little to no control over their day-to-day lives, they do not decide when to wake up, when to eat, what to eat, what their job is, and when they have any access to recreation, or who they can spend time with. This leads to frustration, anger, dependence, and helplessness. This also causes harm to one's mental health. The boredom, monotony and lack of

stimulation further causes stress, frustration, anger, and depression which can be long term and lead to a meaningless life and a lack of purpose and certainly a lack of any joy or happiness.

Prisons and jails can be unpredictable. The rules vary depending upon the staff, the variation of the rules and what is enforced. This keeps the prisoners on high alert which further contributes to anxiety and PTSD.

A 2018 study from the University of Georgia found that overcrowded conditions and the punitive nature of prisons leads to a higher suicide rate, more depression and hostility. It is well known that restrictive housing, particularly solitary confinement, is especially harmful to mental health. More recent studies show that it can lead to permanent changes in people's brains and personalities. Humans are social beings, and the isolation causes significant damage, which is often long term.

Prisoners often witness significant violence which causes further emotional harm and can become associated with aggressive and anti-social behavior. The experience of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of correctional officers is dehumanizing and increases violence in the prison setting. The event of witnessing the violence is also quite harmful to the psyche.

Post-Incarceration syndrome is like PTSD, per a 2013 study. It was common for ex-inmates to experience distrust of others, difficulty maintaining relationships, problems with decision making, social and sensory disorientation, and alienation, along with the above-mentioned PTSD symptoms.

We are often elated when our loved ones are released but they and we are unaware of the lasting consequences that shroud their day-to-day existence. It is critically important for family, friends, and the incarcerated individual to be aware that they have been affected adversely and will need help.

I suspect that many of these symptoms along with the stigma and lack of jobs and housing for formerly incarcerated individuals contribute greatly to recidivism.

This information has been adapted from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/13/mentalhealthimpacts/>

***"Over the course of the past decade, there's been increased willingness to recognize mental health as an essential part of one's well-being." Nicole Spector, 2020***

***"Actions that successfully improve the overall mental health of the population are likely to be accompanied by other important benefits to society." Elliott Goldner, Emily Jenkins, & Dan Bilsker, 2016***

## **May Is Mental Health Awareness Month: Looking at Mental Health In Utah's Prisons**

An Opinion Piece by Molly Prince, LCSW, and Maureen Parker, RN, MSN, ARNP-BCR (UPAN Med Team)

### **May is Mental Health Awareness Month.**

**We want to take this opportunity to bring the importance of improving the mental health care of the 6000+ individuals who are in the care and custody of the state of Utah to the forefront.**

According to the Prison Policy Initiative [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/mental\\_health/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/mental_health/) as of 2025, here are some key statistics on the percentage of people in state prisons, federal prisons, and jails with a mental disorder:

- Percent of people in state prisons who have been diagnosed with a mental disorder: 43%+ In locally-run jails: 44%+
- Percent of people in state prisons with chronic mental illness who have not had treatment since admission: 33%
- Percent of people in federal prisons who reported not receiving any mental health care while incarcerated: 66%+
- Percent of police shootings in 2015 that involved a mental health crisis: 27%+
- Portion of people jailed 3+ times within a year who report having a moderate or serious mental illness: 27%+
- Lasting effects of incarceration: post-traumatic stress, anxiety, impaired decision-making, and much more.

The majority of incarcerated individuals do not receive adequate or appropriate mental health assessment, treatment, or ongoing support during incarceration.

**A mental health diagnosis can include** anything from an adjustment disorder to anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, and everything in between and beyond. It also includes personality disorders. I do not have statistics on the true scope of diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health issues or mental illness in Utah's prison system. From my experience as a therapist in the community for justice-involved individuals for 27+ years, and now as a Director of UPAN, I believe it runs very high. I believe those numbers would be high if we had an idea of the scope of those who have not been diagnosed and either self-medicate with drugs, food, & other addictions, while suffering through without appropriate or meaningful mental health support.

**Lack of a diagnosis does not mean someone is mentally healthy.** Many with mental health challenges have not been formally diagnosed because this kind of thorough evaluation and care has not been available to them. Mental Health challenges often need a combination of medication, talk therapy, and psycho-educational skills courses to manage these various conditions.

**Prison can trigger mental illness.** Often when an individual enters the prison system without a previously diagnosed or currently diagnosable mental health issue, then the often unpredictable and unsafe environment will result in the development of - at the very least - anxiety and depressive symptoms and often post traumatic stress. Extreme stress can result in manifestation of more serious conditions. The lack of support, unpredictability, the dehumanization, and the violence inherent in the prison setting, along with the necessity of of living in an environment without support of family and loss of autonomy can result in physical and mental health issues.

**R & O, isolation, and depression.** In Utah, R & O (the intake process) is the first stop in the individuals prison journey. They are shipped in, stripped of everything that

is their own, provided with an label that may or may not be anything like who they really are within, and separated from their support system for weeks. The majority of individuals entering R & O become anxious, depressed, and / or despondent very quickly. Isolation and lack of connection with important people in their lives contributes to this decline in mental health.

Intakes into prison automatically have minimal privileges. This is not because they have shown they are unable to follow the rules or for behavioral problems, but simply because they processed into prison and those are the rules.

- Residents of R & O cannot purchase much off commissary other than some hygiene items.
- They are not allowed meaningful recreation time out of cell.
- They are restricted to only 135 minutes of phone calls per month when they need the support of their loved ones the most for a wide variety of reasons.
- They are afforded one 1/2-hour video visit per month with their approved visitor after being classified during their time in intake.

Please note, this visit is a win for everyone! A relatively new bit of progress, having been approved by former Executive Director Redd in 2023 after UPAN discussed the importance of video visits with him during the very isolating and difficult time of R & O. For that we are thankful!

**Legislation in the form of HB039,** Submission 4 was passed this year in Utah that includes improving mental health services by requiring UDC to fill all psychiatric positions and report back to the legislature. It is unclear if there are enough positions funded to appropriately give therapeutic attention to all the incarcerated individuals who need of care. (More in article below)

**Lack of enough trained mental health staff available to many who would benefit from therapeutic support.** Currently, medication is the primary method of assisting those with mental health diagnoses to begin managing their mental health. While in recent years, UDC has started to incorporate trained, certified peer support specialists into the mental health services

provided, there need to be many more, and they should be available to everyone in all areas of the prison at any given time.

Currently, there is little, if any, one-on-one therapy available to persons in the care and custody of the state who are well enough to live in general population but really would benefit from this kind of attention. There are many in prison suffering from PTSD that would benefit from individual therapy sessions to work through past trauma and learn effective coping skills to manage the symptoms that can rise up without much warning.

Many high-quality psycho-educational skills classes, risk reduction courses and self-help programs already in place need to be expanded to reach more residents of both prisons. More employment that helps contribute to the self-worth and self-efficacy should be introduced into both prisons as well as the IPP jails.

There are always waiting lists for courses, classes, and programming. We receive complaints of people waiting years to get into things like MRT and CAP treatment programs, as well as other courses that could help them learn to manage their thinking and behavior, which is tied to their mental health. There are not enough providers to deliver ongoing mental health support to everyone who would benefit from it throughout their incarceration.

*If we could help every incarcerated individual with the*

***“Actions that successfully improve the overall mental health of the population are likely to be accompanied by other important benefits to society.” Elliott Goldner, Emily Jenkins, & Dan Bilsker, 2016***

## **2025 Legislative Session Recap**

Summarized by Faye Jenkins

The 2025 legislative session flew by in a whirlwind, with the passage of 582 bills. Listed below are several bills specific to the criminal justice system that may be of interest to those who are incarcerated and their friends and families. More will be included in the June 2025 UPAN Newsletter related to Criminal Fines, other Financial Issues, and Criminal Code Enhancements. Links to all of the bills passed by Utah’s legislature in 2025 can be found at <https://le.utah.gov/asp/passedbills/passedbills.asp>.

### **Increasing IPP beds in two rural county jails.**

**HJR3:** Iron County Correctional Facility received authorization to add 165 beds to the current 35 beds for the state’s inmate placement program.

**SJR5:** Juab County Correctional Facility received authorization to add 205 beds to their current 15 beds for the state’s inmate placement program.

### **Bills related to mental health and substance use**

**HB252S1:** This bill addresses gender issues in secured correctional facilities. It prohibits the use of certain gender-transitioning treatments and prohibits male and female juveniles from sharing sleeping units with associated bathroom facilities.

**HB323:** Requires the UDC to create a drug abuse and trafficking unit within the department to combat illegal drug abuse and trafficking by inmates and individuals on

*therapeutic mental health support and skills they need from the moment they walk into our prisons, they could learn to manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors more effectively. Our prisons would be safer & create an environment for rehabilitation. This would then translate into more successful re-entry experiences upon parole.*

**What needs to occur.** Helping each incarcerated person who wants and needs mental health support requires more than a cursory mental health evaluation covered by some standard screening questions. It would include obtaining past records of any mental health treatment and physical ailments that impact mental health by Correctional Health Services.

Having enough mental health therapists, staff, and resources is vital. Development of a professional therapeutic relationship with those individuals in custody and a trusted therapist would improve the overall well-being of the incarcerated and the entire system.

We appreciate that UDC has implemented and is expanding the use of certified peer support specialists in the past two years. We need more licensed mental health professionals as well as peer support specialists throughout every housing unit of both prisons.

More significant shift forward is necessary if we are to reduce recidivism and improve safety and well-being for those inside the walls, and the community as a whole.

probation and parole. It also enhances coordination with law enforcement agencies.

**HB363S3:** This bill requires the Department of Corrections and the county jails to ensure that each female admitted to a correctional facility is tested for pregnancy and extends the repeal date of the Correctional Postnatal and Early Childhood Advisory Board to 2027.

**SB115S1:** This bill requires state correctional facilities and county jails to screen inmates for substance use disorders, report data related to the screenings, and use the screenings to assist with treatment and programming decisions for inmates.

### **Bills that address the incarceration of individuals.**

**HB312S5:** This bill addresses incarceration in county jails and the state’s correctional facilities.

- Modifies provisions related to the release of individuals due to overcrowding of correctional facilities and

requires a county sheriff to report statistics on releases due to overcrowding and pretrial release.

- Modifies provisions related to contracting with federal and county entities to house individuals and establishes reporting requirements.
- Requires a county sheriff who permits probation to establish probation standards and procedures adopted by the Utah Sheriffs' Association.
- Prohibits the Department of Corrections from housing inmates in a private correctional facility unless the purpose is federal immigration detention or civil detention.
- Modifies provisions related to a county sheriff's release of individuals on their own recognizance.
- Prohibits a county jail official from fixing a financial condition for an individual with a misdemeanor charge for certain domestic violence and driving under the influence offenses.
- Modifies provisions related to orders for pretrial release or detention.
- Modifies provisions related to interlocal agreements regarding the release of incarcerated or supervised individuals.

**SB74S3:** This bill addresses various issues related to individuals in custody.

- Amends which individuals in the custody of the Department of Corrections may petition to have a sex designation change on a birth certificate.
- Prohibits an individual in the custody of the department from filing a petition in district court to legally change the individual's name.
- Includes individuals on parole on the list of individuals to whom a government entity is not required to respond regarding certain records requests.
- Clarifies that the department may independently investigate criminal allegations against individuals in the custody of the department and employees of the department.
- Amends the prison telephone surcharge account to allow revenue generated from individuals using department tablets and other electronic devices to be placed in the account.
- Amends provisions regarding the substances administered by the department when carrying out a judgment of death by lethal intravenous injection.
- Requires an individual on probation or parole who is required to undergo drug testing as a condition of probation or parole to sign a waiver allowing the provider undertaking the testing to notify the individual's supervising officer regarding the results of the testing.

**SB194S1:** Requires the county sheriff to ensure that a jail inmate awaiting trial, sentencing, or disposition of criminal charges has a space to review discovery and other evidence or documents in the jail inmate's criminal case with the jail inmate's counsel and the means to access and review discovery and other evidence or documents in the jail inmate's criminal case.

#### **Bills that address community reintegration.**

**HB31:** This bill requires the Division of Technology Services to make a version of the single sign-on citizen portal available for certain individuals who are or were offenders. If possible, the portal will contain an electronic copy of, or link to, the individual's digital verifiable credentials and records, and if available, information on certain debts the individual may have.

**HB163S1:** This bill establishes the Division of Adult Probation and Parole in Utah's Code and defines specific duties of the division.

**HB167S3:** This bill addresses the reentry and reintegration of individuals into the general public.

- Requires that a local mental health authority coordinate with the Department of Corrections to ensure the continuity of mental health services for county residents on probation or parole.
- Requires a criminal justice coordinating council to identify strategies for connecting county residents on probation, parole, or leaving jail or prison with certain county-based services.
- Requires that a public employer may not exclude an applicant from an initial interview with an expunged conviction and an arrest that occurred as a juvenile.
- Allows the department to procure or adopt technology to coordinate services with outside organizations involved in supporting individuals on probation or parole.

**HB49S2:** Allows individuals whose felony conviction is expunged or reduced to a misdemeanor to serve on a jury.

**HB297S1:** This bill makes several minor modifications to the expungement code.

#### **Bills regarding general criminal justice issues**

**HB354S2:** This bill addresses data collecting and reporting.

- Requires a county jail to collect biometric and other personal information for individuals brought to the county jail for processing or booking into custody and connect an individual in custody with the individual's state identification number and use the state identification number in association with any records regarding the individual.
- Requires the collection and reporting of certain DUI crash data;
- The sharing of info with the Department of Public Safety's statewide criminal intelligence system.
- The collection and reporting of certain lost, stolen, and untraceable firearms and the collection and reporting of the disposition of firearms in the custody of a law enforcement agency;
- Requires law enforcement agencies to supply certain law enforcement officers with a portable biometric capture device.
- Provides that the public safety data portal is the repository for statutorily required data concerning: certain DUI crash data, law enforcement agency reporting requirements for certain firearms data, and

prosecutorial data collection regarding prosecutions of false sexual assault accusations.

- Requires prosecutorial agencies and courts to report to the commission data concerning enhancements to criminal charges, certain prosecutions, dismissals, and declinations to prosecute.
- Requires the Department of Corrections to conduct a risk assessment for every individual convicted of a sex offense that would require the individual to register on the Sex, Kidnap, and Child Abuse

Offender Registry and requires the Department of Corrections to submit the results of risk assessments to the CCJJ quarterly.

**SB41S3:** Recodifies the Sex, Kidnap, and Child Abuse Offender Registry in an attempt to make the code easier to read and understand. There are no substantive changes to the law.

**SB318S3:** This bill creates a commission to address prosecutorial misconduct.

## **2025 - HB039 which Addresses the Medical & Mental Health of Incarcerated Individuals**

*Summarized by Faye Jenkins and Molly Prince, LCSW*

*UPAN has received answers to some questions Molly Prince posed to CHS regarding specific bills listed below. We are including them in this summary.*

### **HB039S4: Addresses medical care for state inmates.**

- **Requires UDC to convene a working group to study their needs regarding an electronic health record (EHR) system** for inmate health care and provide recommendations to the Health and Human Services Interim Committee. *DHHS and UDC has been in contact with the leadership of Fusion (the company that provides the EHR). They have had meetings and demonstrated areas that need improvement, and there is a commitment for improvement. Much of the need for improvement stems from being able to implement the 1115 Waiver (for Medicaid billing in certain circumstances) and easily access records for continuity of care.*

- **Requires the UDC to contract with psychiatrists to meet staffing needs for correctional health services.** *In response to UPAN's question if this law will improve the ability to contract with licensed mental health providers including and in addition to psychiatrists in order to provide more comprehensive and necessary mental health care without Utah's prisons, we were told that this goal remains a top priority. Correctional Health Services is working with the Utah State Hospital to start telepsych services and continue to work to maximize efficiency to meet the needs of as many patients as they can.*

- **Requires the UDC to provide an annual report to the Health and Human Services Interim Committee** concerning the provision of comprehensive health care to inmates. *We are waiting for more information on this one. UPAN is hoping to learn how the public can access these reports on the funding and how it is spent.*

- **Requires the UDC and a local mental health authority to assess certain individuals for available community-based services and,** based on the assessment results, take steps to connect them to appropriate community-based services. *UPAN was told that this is a new direction and a work in progress. Molly Prince, LCSW of UPAN is excited to learn of this step to partner with and refer to community based services. Since this is a new approach that was approved by the legislature, DHHS / CHS is starting from scratch. It has only been a few weeks since the legislative session closed, therefore, there is not yet a definite timeline for this program to be in place, or what the actual plan is to get this in place, Dr. Bank of DHHS explained that there are many ideas and things in process at this time so that DHHS can continue to be innovative and continue to find approaches to implement for the elevation of medical care for our incarcerated individuals. We were assured that they will keep UPAN posted as there are developments in this process.*

***“Just because no one else can heal or do your inner work for you, doesn't mean you can, should, or need to do it alone.” Lisa Olivera, 2022***

**Remember: “Being a mother is learning about strengths you didn't know you had.” Linda Wooten**

### **Couple of Smiles and Maybe a Laugh**

Can you guess a cow's favorite animal of these three? Deer, Elk, Moose ~ If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring? Pilgrims ~ If you suck at playing the trumpet, that's probably why ~ I asked a one-legged woman where she works, she said, “IHOP” (Bad! Ed)~ My friend Jack communicates with vegetables. Jack and the beans talk.

***Spring is the season of new life. New life offers hope, growth, & a new, better future. That's cool. Be cool. Ed***

### **Utah Prisoner Advocate Network Contact Info:**

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**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead.**