SafeUT & School Board Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: August 21, 2026
Scheduled Time: 11:30 PM - 1:30 PM
Location: Virtual Meeting

Members Present	Members Absent	Associate Members Present
Erin Wynn, Chair	Shauntelle Cota	Ashley Keller
Barbara Stallone	Cassidy Dragunat	Michelle Knight
Anne Brown	Rep. Steven Eliason	Karina Rasmussen
Sen. Heidi Balderree	Joanna Sutherland	Katie Mazzie
Michael Staley	Matthew Gwynn	Laura Warburton
Denia-Marie Wright	Rebecca Hyde	Levi Grisenti

1. Call to Order

The meeting proceeded with approval of the prior meeting minutes and then moved into the SafeUT team's program updates and data reports.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Commission members reviewed the prior meeting minutes. Barbara Stallone requested that the attendance section be reviewed because several individuals had been identified as Commission members when they were associate members. Erin Wynn proposed that the attendance information be reviewed and corrected.

Barbara Stallone suggested amending Senator Baldaree's motion to approve so that the minutes could be approved while allowing the attendance classifications to be corrected. Senator Baldaree accepted the amendment as a friendly amendment. The motion was seconded. Erin Wynn called for the vote, and no objections were raised. The motion carried.

Action: Erin Wynn and Brittnee will review the attendance classifications and make the necessary corrections to the prior minutes.

3. SafeUT Updates and Data Reports

Denia-Marie Wright presented the rolling 13-month SafeUT summary and July 2026 utilization information. The report included active users, downloads, school-year enrollment, chats, tips, back-and-forth messages, and life-saving interventions. The data continued to demonstrate seasonal variation, with lower utilization during summer months when school is out and increased activity during the school year.

The leading tip topics continued to include suicide, bullying, and substance abuse, followed by self-harm and school complaints. The 13-month data included 477 potential school threats. Three were identified as higher-education or college-campus threats, and 120 were identified as specific school threats. Additional reports involved general violence and weapons concerns.

The year-over-year comparison for July 2026 showed that tips did not experience a decline compared with the prior year, while the number of back-and-forth tip messages increased by approximately 67 percent. Denia-Marie Wright noted that some overall percentage measures were trending downward, but the underlying counts did not appear to be declining as dramatically. She indicated that additional analysis may be useful to determine whether the intensity of conversations remains relatively stable despite changes in message volume.

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The Commission also reviewed July downloads for Frontline and the National Guard, as well as downloads since inception. Detailed Frontline and National Guard utilization information had been distributed separately to Commission members for additional review.

Denia-Marie Wright reported that the SafeUT team had met with Annika Hunt of the National Guard regarding additional National Guard marketing and outreach responsibilities for the upcoming year. Further information is expected as planning continues.

4. SafeUT White Paper

Denia-Marie Wright reported that the SafeUT white paper had been completed. The project was developed in response to inquiries from other states seeking information about how Utah created and sustained SafeUT, including its legislative partnerships, school relationships, operational model, and lessons learned.

The white paper is intended to describe crisis intervention by text for school-age children, college students, and families and to provide a practical framework for jurisdictions considering similar services. The project included participation from Commission members, HMHI operations staff, and the research team.

Barbara Stallone emphasized that the paper includes lessons learned from mistakes and missteps during the development of SafeUT so that other jurisdictions can avoid similar problems. Commission members were asked to review the completed document and identify significant omissions or substantive changes.

The Commission discussed possible publication approaches, including a non-academic publication that could preserve the collaborative contributions of commissioners, researchers, and HMHI operations staff. Members also discussed possible pre-publication sharing under embargo, a coordinated public launch or press release, and distribution through legislative and national policy organizations.

The Commission agreed that the final version should first be reviewed internally before it is shared more broadly, including with the Parents Advisory Committee.

Action: Denia-Marie Wright will distribute the completed white paper to Commission members. Members were encouraged to provide substantive feedback within approximately two weeks.

5. School Safety Center Update

Michelle Knight provided an update from the School Safety Center and Prevention team. The school safety playbook is being updated to incorporate new requirements concerning school safety, security, and specialists or directors resulting from the current legislative session.

Levi Grisenti reported that the Emergency Preparedness Planning Guide for Local Education Agencies is also being updated. The revised guide is expected to include significant recovery and mental-health components and is anticipated to be available by the end of the year.

Michelle Knight reported that SafeUT is being incorporated into School Safety Center trainings, resources, and marketing materials. The Center's newsletters and listservs provide additional opportunities to distribute SafeUT information to school and suicide-prevention audiences.

Anne Brown suggested providing school administrative personnel with a SafeUT flyer and asking schools to print and display multiple copies in visible locations. Michelle Knight indicated that the School Safety Center could assist with distribution if SafeUT supplied the desired flyer. Denia-Marie Wright agreed to coordinate the matter.

6. Subcommittee Reports

Third-Party Vendor Subcommittee: No substantive report or new matter requiring Commission action was reported.

Data Subcommittee: Barbara Stallone reported that outstanding data requests could be addressed through information expected to be available in the annual report. The requests were therefore approved.

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Parents Advisory Committee: Laura Warburton reported that the committee had not met during the summer. A September meeting agenda had been distributed. She also reported outreach to the PTA president regarding possible participation by a PTA representative, with the goal of strengthening the connection between the Parents Advisory Committee and the broader PTA community.

7. Legislative Update

Senator Baldaree reported that he had contacted his legislative assistant to open an appropriation request for ongoing National Guard SafeUT funding. The precise amount was being confirmed. During the discussion, Denia-Marie Wright indicated that the expected amount was approximately $30,000, subject to final confirmation.

Erin Wynn discussed the Commission's anticipated need for member participation in legislative testimony. Historically, Commission leadership and partners have provided testimony and support regarding SafeUT policy, funding, and administration. Members interested in participating in legislative testimony or gaining experience with the process were encouraged to communicate their interest so that preparation could be provided.

Action: Senator Baldaree and Denia-Marie Wright will continue coordination regarding the National Guard appropriation and funding amount.

8. Staffing Qualifications and Budget Discussion

The Commission discussed staffing qualifications for mental-health professionals who respond through the SafeUT application and the budget implications of maintaining the existing staffing model. Denia-Marie Wright explained that SafeUT has historically hired master's-level counselors and has communicated that staffing model to parents, schools, and other stakeholders.

Denia-Marie Wright clarified that SafeUT staff provide crisis intervention rather than traditional therapy. They do not diagnose users or provide deep trauma treatment; instead, they provide crisis response and follow established protocols. Rising salary costs associated with master's-level licensure and market-rate adjustments have prompted consideration of whether SafeUT could use a mixture of master's-level clinicians and appropriately trained crisis workers.

One option discussed was the use of certified crisis workers who already perform crisis-line functions. Such a model could provide staffing flexibility and allow personnel to move between crisis-line and SafeUT functions. The Commission also discussed whether a legislative or administrative change would be required to authorize certain crisis workers to provide SafeUT services.

Barbara Stallone emphasized that a staffing change would represent a significant change in how SafeUT has been described publicly. She recommended that the Commission study the available options before making a final decision, particularly because the Commission has historically emphasized the use of master's-level clinicians when communicating with parents, schools, and legislators.

Michael Staley asked whether 988 had previously undergone a similar transition and whether evaluation research could provide evidence regarding outcomes associated with different staffing qualifications. He also noted that staffing flexibility may provide operational benefits when roles are designed around the actual services being delivered.

Katie Mazzie, serving as the Utah System of Higher Education representative for the meeting, stated that the important consideration is whether staff possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, competence, and training necessary to provide the expected level of crisis intervention while maintaining timely access to service. She also emphasized that any staffing change would require deliberate communications and marketing planning.

Anne Brown stated that protocol-driven crisis intervention may not require the same level of licensure as clinical therapy and suggested considering whether highly trained professionals could perform this work while preserving master's-level clinicians for situations requiring more specialized clinical services.

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No final staffing-policy change was approved. Erin Wynn requested a broader presentation for the next meeting covering the available staffing options, advantages and disadvantages, regulatory or legislative requirements, budget considerations, and communications implications. The Commission also expressed interest in hearing from 988 representatives regarding comparable staffing models and outcomes.

9. Roundtable Discussion

Barbara Stallone raised the need for a standardized Commission process governing letters of support. She stated that the Data Subcommittee is not the appropriate body to determine whether the Commission should issue a letter of support and that a consistent process would help ensure fairness and transparency.

Erin Wynn noted the importance of determining whether a letter would be signed by individual commissioners in their representative capacities or issued formally on behalf of the SafeUT Commission. The distinction may affect commissioners who represent agencies or organizations with separate reporting or policy obligations.

Barbara Stallone explained that, to her recollection, the Commission had formally signed only one letter of support, which concerned the Commission's own appropriation. Some commissioners were unable to participate because the appropriation differed from the Governor's requested budget. The prior letter was signed by the chair and two legislative members rather than by the Commission as a whole.

The Commission discussed developing a standard operating procedure that would establish how support-letter requests are received, evaluated, approved, documented, and signed, including circumstances requiring recusal. The staff side agreed to research the issue, organize the options neutrally, and present the information to the Commission for independent consideration.

During the roundtable, Michael Staley also reported that the Utah Youth Suicide Research Project report is expected to be released August 31, 2026. He noted that the research provides information concerning youth who died by suicide between 2016 and 2019 and described ongoing work with HMHI and 988 on an outcomes-evaluation research project. He also reported that the Utah Suicide Prevention Committee and Coalition is finalizing its 2026–2031 five-year plan, which includes discussion of crisis-line utilization and promotion and is expected to be released in September.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2026.

11. Adjournment

Following final remarks and expressions of appreciation, the meeting adjourned.

Minutes prepared by: Brittnee Bassett, Office of the Utah Attorney General

DRAFT Minutes will be voted on for approval by the SafeUT & School Safety Commission on September 18, 2026.

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