SafeUT & School Safety Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: October 16, 2026
Scheduled Time: 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM
Location: Virtual Meeting

Members Present	Members Absent	Associate Members Present
Denia-Marie Wright, Sub. Chair	Erin Wynn, Chair	Laura Warburton
Barbara Stallone	Matthew Gwynn	Holli Hjelm
Sen. Heidi Balderree	Michael Staley	
Rep. Steven Eliason	Anne Brown	
Joanna Sutherland		
Cassidy Dragunat		
Shauntelle Cota		
Brittnee Bassett, Staff		

1. Call to Order, Quorum, and Meeting Procedure

Denia-Marie (Dema) Wright filled in as substitute chair and meeting facilitator.

The meeting facilitator began with the SafeUT program data presentation. During the presentation, Barbara Stallone noted that Brittnee Bassett had confirmed a quorum. The group completed the data report before moving to formal business.

After the presentation, the facilitator again checked that quorum remained present and then moved to approval of the prior meeting minutes and the remaining agenda items.

2. SafeUT Program Data and Utilization Update

Dema Wright presented a 13-month summary of SafeUT activity. The program recorded approximately 19,000 chats and 7,000 tips during the period reviewed.

The five leading tip topics over the 13-month period continued to rotate among suicide, bullying, substance use, self-harm, and school complaint. Potential school threats were reported separately by setting, including higher education and K–12 campuses. Violence and weapons were also tracked as general categories; the report showed 553 such items over the 13-month period.

Barbara Stallone asked what was included under “school complaint,” noting that some reports might involve routine dissatisfaction with schoolwork. Wright explained that the category ranges from lower-level concerns, such as a student objecting to tests, to more serious reports of suspected teacher

misconduct, abuse, or other conduct that a student believes is inappropriate. Those matters are categorized separately from violence and weapons.

Rep. Steve Eliason asked how the program's current use of "messages" related to the previously used term "threads." Wright clarified that the program had replaced "threads" with "messages" because "thread" could be understood as a complete conversation. The count is intended to represent individual message bubbles exchanged during a chat, rather than one whole conversation.

Wright reviewed the year-over-year trend and said SafeUT utilization continued on a downward trajectory observed over the previous couple of years. The program has begun working with Boncom, its agency partner, on a deeper analysis of utilization and factors that may be contributing to the decline. Wright cautioned that this work will take time but expressed hope that the findings will help guide adjustments for the upcoming year.

September activity remained substantial, with more than 1,000 chats and 745 tips. The leading topics for the month were suicide, bullying, substance use, self-harm, and violence. The report listed 74 potential school threats for September.

Wright reminded members that an "X" in the data presentation means a count below 10, used to protect anonymity.

Wright announced that the web-based chat and tip submission experience had been redesigned. The previous static screen has been replaced with a more familiar, modern chat-style interface modeled on the pop-up chat experiences commonly used on websites. Wright credited John's team with building the experience and said the updated process is intended to make online chat and tip submission more streamlined. The team welcomed feedback and had already received positive reactions.

The Frontline and National Guard slide displayed download figures labeled August, although Wright believed the label should say September. She committed to checking the figures and correcting the slide if needed, and therefore did not present the displayed download totals as confirmed September data.

Wright reported that SafeUT attended a Frontline-related conference in St. George in September. Holli Hjelm from the marketing team made useful contacts with Frontline organizations and marketing staff across the state. The team was also continuing to work with Annika Hunt at the National Guard on possible marketing and outreach activities.

Rebecca Hyde added that University of Utah Health provides Frontline information to staff during mandatory orientation.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

After the SafeUT data report, Barbara Stallone moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Steve Eliason seconded the motion. The facilitator called for a vote, and the participants responding expressed support. The minutes were treated as approved.

4. Frontline and National Guard Updates

The facilitator asked whether there were additional updates regarding Frontline or National Guard beyond the information included in the SafeUT report. No additional substantive report was provided at that point.

The team's current outreach work includes developing connections with Frontline organizations and coordinating with the National Guard to determine what marketing and outreach could be most useful. The September conference in St. George was identified as a useful opportunity for establishing contacts.

The displayed download figures require verification because the slide was labeled August and may have contained a month-labeling error. The corrected figures should be circulated when confirmed.

5. School Safety Center Update

Shauntelle Cota reported that implementation of wearable panic-alert devices was nearing completion. Most schools had selected vendors and were working with those vendors to place the devices in schools. The School Safety Center planned to provide additional information through its newsletter.

Cota offered to help disseminate SafeUT announcements, including information about the forthcoming translation feature, through the School Safety Center newsletter and other newsletters within her area of responsibility.

Cota said the School Safety Center was reviewing initial lessons from the tragic incident in Bend, Oregon. She noted that more information would likely emerge over time and that the Center would continue to assess what could be learned and applied in Utah.

Based on the information available to the Center, Cota said Utah appeared to have established several important safety measures, including panic-alert devices and door-locking practices. She emphasized that SafeUT is also an important component of school safety because it gives students a channel to report threats and helps adults remain informed about student needs. The Center would share additional findings if they became relevant to SafeUT notifications or communications.

6. Subcommittee Reports

Barbara Stallone reported that two data requests had been received. Both were approved by email because they sought basic information already available in the annual report, presented in a different format. No further issues were reported.

Laura Warburton said the committee was making progress in listening to parents who have concerns or difficulties with the program. The committee's immediate focus is to better understand the issues before bringing them to the full Commission and identifying possible solutions. The Utah PTA president is participating, and the committee is seeking additional voices, including people who may hold differing perspectives, so that the discussion reflects a range of parent experiences.

Warburton identified advertising and communication as likely areas for improvement and suggested that SafeUT may need to return to a more comprehensive education campaign. She said the committee was continuing to gather input and would report findings when the concerns were clearer.

7. Legislative Update and National Guard Funding Request

Sen. Heidi Balderree said she was preparing to present a request for additional National Guard funding for marketing or advertising. Although the presentation was not expected until January and had not yet been scheduled, she wanted to prepare early and requested supporting statistics, data, and talking points.

Wright offered to have the SafeUT team assemble relevant data and suggested coordinating with Annika Hunt at the National Guard to develop shared talking points and determine whether National Guard participation at the presentation would be useful.

Sen. Balderree emphasized that a strong, well-supported presentation was the priority. Additional testimony or attendance would be helpful but was not essential. She said she would notify the group when the presentation date and time were known.

Barbara Stallone suggested that the Commission Chair normally would attend such a presentation and that the Commission could consider preparing a support letter identifying the funding request as a Commission priority. Sen. Balderree welcomed the suggestion.

Laura Warburton offered to testify if she had sufficient advance notice. She expressed a preference for appearing in person if possible. Sen. Balderree agreed to share timing details when available.

Wright said the SafeUT team would work on the data and begin coordination with Annika Hunt and Sen. Balderree's office. The group also discussed the possibility of a Commission letter and additional support for the presentation.

8. Upcoming SafeUT Language-Translation Feature

Rep. Steve Eliason noted that funding secured during the prior legislative session had supported language-translation functionality for SafeUT and asked about the launch timeline. Wright said the feature was expected to be released in November, likely early in the month, although the exact date needed confirmation from the IT project manager.

The feature is intended to allow a user to submit a chat or text in the language they choose. The content will be translated into English for the counselor, and the counselor's English response will then be translated back into the user's selected language. Wright described this as an important way to make SafeUT available to more people in Utah.

The group discussed communication channels for announcing the feature. Options included SafeUT social media, newsletters distributed through the Utah State Board of Education and other partners, a push notification to app users, DHHS social media, and DHHS's 988 newsletter.

Sen. Balderree offered to amplify announcements through her social media accounts and emphasized that the primary goal should be broad awareness and use of the feature. Wright invited participants to identify additional organizations that could help spread the word.

Barbara Stallone suggested sharing the announcement with refugee organizations, given the feature's language-accessibility benefits. Wright agreed and asked members to email additional outreach ideas so they could be included in the release plan.

Sen. Balderree suggested that, depending on the confirmed release date, a launch announcement at the Capitol could be considered if it coincided with an appropriate legislative meeting day. Wright welcomed the idea but noted that the release date might shift if final IT fixes were needed.

Holli Hjelm recommended that public messaging emphasize SafeUT's accessibility and its availability to people regardless of the language they speak, rather than leading with the technology used to provide translation. She cautioned that the messaging should preserve the distinction between

SafeUT's human-provided support and automated chatbots. Wright agreed that communications should emphasize real help from people.

9. School Safety White Paper

Wright reported that work on the SafeUT white paper was close to completion. The team continued to make edits and adjustments with assistance from colleagues in the Attorney General's office.

Wright thanked those who had submitted edits and comments and specifically recognized Barbara Stallone for her sustained help and expertise in moving the document forward. The goal was to complete the remaining work soon.

10. Roundtable: SafeUT Access on Chromebooks and Utilization Reporting

Rep. Steve Eliason requested a future agenda item to review how SafeUT functions on student phones and Chromebooks, particularly as schools implement policies limiting cell-phone use in classrooms. He asked whether every local education agency has SafeUT available on Chromebooks, whether use on Chromebooks can be distinguished from phone use, and whether an icon or other easy access point is available on student devices.

Rep. Eliason also raised the issue of chats that begin on one device and continue on another. He said the counselor may not be able to connect the two conversations and requested an IT update on functionality that could link a user's accounts or chats, potentially through a code or similar process.

Barbara Stallone described a concern raised by a Davis County parent whose child was in the middle of a SafeUT chat when the Chromebook shut off at 11:00 p.m. She said the incident should be considered as the Commission evaluates the transition from phones to Chromebooks.

Shauntelle Cota said Chromebook shutoff settings would be a local district decision. She offered to contact Davis School District and its superintendent to understand the applicable policies and determine whether modifications could be made to accommodate SafeUT use.

Cota also asked whether superintendents could already view district-wide SafeUT usage through the dashboard. Wright confirmed that no change had been made and that superintendents who have access to the dashboard can still view usage.

Rep. Eliason clarified that the concern was not simply whether the data was available, but whether superintendents would receive a regular summary without needing to log in and drill down into the dashboard. He suggested considering monthly or quarterly school-level utilization reports so that superintendents and local education agency administrators could identify schools with high usage and schools with little or no usage, then consider whether further education or outreach was needed.

Wright suggested that Cota and Rep. Eliason collaborate offline, beginning by asking superintendents what information they would find useful and how they would prefer to receive it.

11. Roundtable: Marketing Staffing and School-Level Outreach

Rep. Eliason clarified that the SafeUT issue was not a program budget cut, but a shift from project-management positions toward marketing positions. He noted that some prior staff were no longer with the program and asked about progress hiring three people with marketing backgrounds to help address the decline in utilization.

Wright confirmed that recruitment was underway and that the team was working to bring in people with the appropriate skill sets.

Rep. Eliason thanked the program for the detailed reports circulated to Commission members. He described a recent visit to a local high school where he spoke with students about mental health and SafeUT. The superintendent was familiar with SafeUT and wanted greater visibility into utilization across the district.

Rep. Eliason suggested that SafeUT consider sending superintendents a monthly or quarterly version of the Commission's utilization report, showing school-level use. The intent would be to help district leaders identify disparities in awareness or use and focus outreach where utilization is low.

Cota agreed to help explore how the information could be communicated. The facilitator recommended that Cota and Rep. Eliason coordinate offline and first determine the needs and preferences of superintendents.

12. Roundtable: Future Agenda Items and Data-Breach Update

Brittnee Bassett said she had added an item for the next meeting to discuss further the functionality of the SafeUT app with Chromebook at Rep. Eliason's request, subject to confirming with Chair Erin Wynn that the item was timely. Wright identified John DeGray from HMHI IT as the person expected to speak and said she would provide his contact information. Bassett said she would verify whether he was already on the meeting invitation list.

Barbara Stallone asked whether the next meeting could include an update on a data breach involving another provider, provided that the item remained timely. She noted that the Attorney General's office had been looking into the matter and said an update would help Commission members understand the status. Bassett agreed to follow up.

13. Roundtable: Other Participant Updates

Rebecca Hyde said the marketing-related work was moving forward and referred members to information she had posted in the meeting chat.

Cassidy Dragunat reported no additional updates. Joanna Sutherland also had no additional updates. Laura Warburton indicated that she had nothing further to add.

Sen. Balderree thanked Wright and the SafeUT team in advance for preparing data and talking points for the National Guard funding request, thanked Stallone for suggesting a Commission support letter, and thanked Warburton for offering to testify.

Cota reiterated the School Safety Center's willingness to help distribute information about SafeUT and related updates through its communications channels.

15. Adjournment

The facilitator thanked participants for attending and for their contributions. Members were reminded to follow up on their assigned action items. 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 November 20, 2026