

# What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



NO. 45 | OCTOBER 5, 2024

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

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

Daggett 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) and Daggett County hosted a “think tank” gathering 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 and subsequent outreach to 15 leaders and community members in Daggett County. As the smallest county in Utah, this represents a higher participation percentage than most.

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: home and family, education, health and wellbeing, business and economics, and culture and community engagement.

### HOME & FAMILY

In Daggett County, parents are recognized as the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. Recommendations include:

- Discuss internet safety and develop an online safety plan with children prior to engaging in online activity. Establish clear guidelines, teach children to spot red flags, and encourage children to have open communication with parents and trusted adults.
- Encourage parents to seek parenting skill training programs online or in person to help build stronger relationships with children and reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect.
- Find ways to support and encourage families facing challenges to help reduce stress.
- Instruct children on body safety and boundaries, including the importance of saying ‘no’ to inappropriate requests both in the physical world and the virtual world.
- Make sure young women understand that consent includes respect for their own body.
- Recognize the importance of parent’s engagement in sex education at home, recognizing that lack of open dialogue can contribute to lack of consent, lack of healthy relationships, and lack of understanding overall for young men and women alike.
- Research and explore resources and education as a parent to increase the comfort level in discussing sexual topics.
- Secure counseling for daughters on how to thrive in college academically and socially, including information on staying safe from sexual assault.

- Understand warning signs of substance use in teens such as drop in grades, change in behavior, defiance, change in friends, angry outbursts, anxiety, and depression.

### EDUCATION

Leaders in Daggett County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. They recognize the essential role graduating from high school and especially college plays in a woman’s life. Recommendations include:

- Assist in expanding early learning programs in the county including childcare, pre-kindergarten, and all-day kindergarten. Provide support and feedback to Daggett School District’s strategic planning in these areas.
- Build on the positives achieved through smaller class sizes in K-8 classrooms.
- Challenge the shortage of diagnostic tools and long waits before intervention begins for young children to provide the best start possible.
- Discuss employment pathways with girls and young women that include STEM and trades. Expose them to trade-based programs tied to construction and industry opportunities such as welding and other journeyman programs. Open the door for them to major employers in the county.
- Encourage girls and young women to participate in STEM competitions so they can build confidence and see themselves working in STEM.
- Expand extracurricular opportunities outside of 4-H and FAA, including encouraging students to participate in Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).
- Explain the value of high school students participating in concurrent enrollment classes, earning credits, and being acquainted with the rigors of college and how courses are administered.
- Highlight opportunities found through Utah CTE Career Pathways to College & Career Readiness.
- Inspire counselors to help students prepare to adapt to college life, providing tools for students to successfully transition from an environment where they are a “big fish in a small pond” to a “small fish in a big pond.”

- Openly discuss the negative impact of substance abuse and drug use among teens in the community, educating parents and students alike.
- Promote UBTECH online coursework, including training for information technology, medical assistants, electrical technicians, and workforce skills.
- Provide community education in programs such as Office Suites and Google Sheets to enhance remote work skills for adult learners.
- Raise awareness of the Utah Adult Education Program which helps adults' complete high school or a GED, Adult Basic Education, or English Language skills.
- Recommend women returning to the workforce consider pursuing the Utah Alternative Teacher Certification, increasing the number of teachers and providing stable employment.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

Concern over the mental health and emotional wellbeing of girls and women in Daggett County emerged as a primary theme. Recommendations include:

- Assist with and support the "Silver Friends" program, ensuring older adults continue to have social support.
- Develop a support system for transportation to healthcare visits, especially for older women, as access to care is geographically distant.
- Encourage girls and women to participate in mental health counseling to address issues such as poor body image, low confidence, lack of self-respect, anxiety, stress, and expectations to be perfect. Explore educational programs led by trained speakers, both in person and virtual.
- Help women find ways to build self-esteem each day, taking a moment to think of reasons to be proud and reflecting on personal value and strengths. Share methods with others.
- Lend support to the Health Department's Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP), which works to reduce the negative consequences of teen pregnancy through teaching about topics such as healthy relationships, life skills, education, and career success.
- Partner with Daggett County's Victim Advocate to find ways to reduce stigma and support survivors through Success for the Survivor and the Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault (UCASA).
- Provide programs to help families transition out of poverty and addiction.
- Support the Daggett Substance Abuse Committee to help reduce community issues around opioid use.
- Utilize the Northeastern Counseling Center and similar organizations for information on reducing risk factors for substance use and increasing protective factors through evidence-based programs and strategies.

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Daggett County women struggle with limited opportunities for careers and leadership, as well as with conscious and unconscious bias. Recommendations include:

- Address poverty and reduce and mitigate its effects; ensure women know about available resources and can access them.
- Celebrate and respect the abilities of women serving in full-time government offices. Continue to support elected women officials by acknowledging their contributions to improving the community.
- Increase the number of women serving in key decision-making positions.
- Lobby for living wages for elected offices primarily held by women such as recorder, clerk, and auditor, who qualify for low-income housing at the existing level of compensation.

- Promote gender-neutral occupations and support women's training in traditionally male-dominated fields such as construction and agriculture.
- Provide access and opportunities for leadership positions traditionally held by men (e.g., boards and commissions).
- Reduce and address issues of sexism in the workplace.
- Reimagine and focus on creating career opportunities, not simply employment opportunities, for young women.
- Shift attitudes that limiting opportunities to traditional roles for men and women is appropriate.
- Target creating year-round employment opportunities, including remote work possibilities.

## CULTURE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The "think tank" attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Daggett County is heavily influenced by religion and the size of the county. Leaders are concerned about the limitations and decreased value culture has placed on women and girls. Recommendations include:

- Address population declines in the county and coordinate efforts to increase employment, housing, medical, and educational services.
- Build opportunities for educated youth to employ their skills productively, reducing out-migration that results in a youth drain. Focus on retaining a vibrant workforce to minimize young people leaving for larger cities.
- Create a community independent of the primary faith, including ways to connect cities across the county.
- Develop methods to amplify the sharing of events and news in the absence of radio and newspaper outlets.
- Educate women about the possibilities for leadership and growth within the framework of current religious and cultural conventions.
- Ensure women are listened to in all settings and that their voices are not minimized nor silenced.
- Facilitate interfaith activities, such as the community Christmas dinner, regularly. Invite women of all ages, abilities, beliefs, cultures, faiths, and races to learn about and value faith similarities and differences.
- Partner with local and regional educational institutions to create mentorship programs for girls and women.
- Recognize the impact of short-term rentals on the housing sector and the sense of community.

## CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Daggett 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.

Thank you to Daggett County staff and to the collaborators and partners in Daggett County who supported the community conversation. Report authors: Amy Z. Anderson & Dr. Susan R. Madsen.