

Police Chiefs to Hold Press Conference Urging Health Coverage Expansion

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Some Utah law enforcement leaders are making a crime prevention case for expanding health coverage.

Provo Police Chief John King and Orem Police Chief Gary Giles will hold a press conference on Tuesday, May 19, 11 a.m., at the Provo Police Department, City Center Building, 48 South 300 West in Provo.

On behalf of more than 65 Utah police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors, the police chiefs are calling on state lawmakers to accept federal funds to extend health insurance for more than 97,000 Utah residents in an effort to prevent future crime and violence and save the state money. The law enforcement leaders are urging support of the Governor's plan for expansion, which includes provisions for mental health.

The local law enforcement leaders will make their case with the release of a report, ***Our Officers Make That Knock on the Door***, which highlights research showing that having a mental illness in addition to an alcohol or drug use disorder can increase the odds of engaging in violence by 26 times. The report also cites studies that find that proven medical treatments for troubled youths can cut future arrests in half or more.

The law enforcement leaders will also emphasize the savings that can result from coverage expansion. An independent analysis of savings from three proven programs aimed at getting troubled youth with aggression and substance abuse programs back on track provided an average net savings to society of \$25,000 to \$31,000 for every youth served. Meanwhile, the cost to lock up a juvenile in Utah is \$39,000 for just six months.