

UTAH HEALTH CARE SOLUTIONS POLICY CONFERENCE

January 15, 2026, 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Utah Cultural Celebration Center

1355 W 3100 S. West Valley City, UT 84119



AGENDA

- 8:00 am** Check-in and Breakfast
- 8:30 am** Welcome
- 9:00 am** Keynote: Edwin Park, Georgetown University Professor
- 10:00 am** Oral Health Panel
- 11:00 am** Underserved Utahns Panel
- 11:45 am** Lunch
- 12:15 pm** Legislative Panel

Utah Health Policy Project (UHPP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advancing sustainable health care solutions for underserved Utahns through better access, education, and public policy. Since 2006, UHPP has worked hard to develop solutions to create a health system that provides better access to higher quality health care at a lower cost. UHPP prides itself on being an open resource for the public, community leaders, the media, businesses, health care providers, and policymakers.

Take Care Utah (TCU) is a program of UHPP that helps Utahns access health insurance coverage and navigate the health care system. TCU aims to reduce barriers to health access through hands-on application assistance and advocacy. The TCU team offers direct services free of charge to assist with Medicaid/CHIP applications, Marketplace support, case advocacy, community education, and more.

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UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT AND TAKE CARE UTAH

Matt Slonaker has been the Executive Director of UHPP since 2013. He attended the University of Montana, where he pursued his passion for policy and government. Matt also completed a law degree, where he solidified his interest in policy reform. After completing law school, Matt joined Governor Brian Schweitzer's budget team MT, assuming the role of economist and tax policy analyst. Matt relocated to Washington, D.C., where he served as a nonprofit policy adviser and outreach coordinator for Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus. Matt later moved to New York City to work at Care for the Homeless. His role involved coordinating a coalition of healthcare providers focused on serving the homeless population amidst significant changes to state Medicaid policy. Matt's commitment to improving healthcare extended to Utah, where he played a pivotal role as a founding organizer of the successful Proposition 3 campaign to expand Medicaid. With his dedicated team and community partners, he continues to work tirelessly to develop innovative strategies that strengthen Utah's healthcare system. Matt has a second job meeting the demands of his two little girls who seem to have an endless appetite for his attention. He doesn't mind.



Daryl Herrschaft is the Director of Take Care Utah and joined UHPP in 2019 to help underserved populations in Utah secure health insurance coverage. He was previously an HIV Prevention Counselor at the Utah AIDS Foundation. Daryl is a native of Philadelphia and spent 22 years working in for non-profit organizations in Washington, DC. Including 13 years at the Human Rights Campaign. Prior to moving to Utah, he worked as a Disaster Corps member for Habitat for Humanity aiding in Hurricane Sandy recovery on the Jersey Shore. Daryl enjoys gardening, cooking, bicycling and restoring old homes.



KEYNOTE



Edwin Park | Research Professor at the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy's Center for Children and Families

Edwin Park is a Research Professor at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy and a nationally recognized expert on Medicaid, CHIP, and the Affordable Care Act. His work focuses on health coverage, Medicaid and CHIP financing, tax policy, drug pricing, and private insurance markets.

Previously, he spent 17 years at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, most recently as Vice President for Health Policy. He has also served as a health policy advisor at the White House during the Clinton Administration and as professional staff on the U.S. Senate Finance Committee. He recently served on the Biden-Harris Presidential Transition Agency Review Team for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He holds a J.D., magna cum laude, from Harvard Law School and an A.B., summa cum laude, from Princeton University.

ORAL HEALTH PANEL

Oral health is a vital but often overlooked part of our healthcare system. Many Utahns face difficulties accessing quality oral health coverage, and there have been significant changes in oral health policy over the last few years. Our panel of oral health experts will share their views on the oral health landscape in Utah and ways to improve access to care.

Moderator



Stacey Swilling, DDS | State Dental Director

Dr. Stacey Swilling serves as the State Dental Director and leads the Oral Health Program at Utah Department of Health and Human Services. Following completion of her BS degree with an emphasis in Biology and Chemistry, she completed her dental studies at the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry. Dr. Swilling came to DHHS with a variety of experiences in over twenty years in the dental field. She has practiced clinical dentistry in both private and public health settings, has pursued leadership opportunities in organized dentistry and through intensive continuing education courses, and she holds an adjunct faculty appointment at the University of Utah School of Dentistry. Dr. Swilling is an advocate for access to oral health care in the State of Utah.

ORAL HEALTH PANEL

James Bekker, DMD | Associate Dean, University of Utah School of Dentistry



Dr. James Bekker is a pediatric dentist with extensive experience in both urban and rural private practice. He has held key leadership roles, including Clinical and Medical Director of the Pediatric Dental Graduate program at Primary Children's Hospital and Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs at the University of Utah School of Dentistry (UUSOD). Currently, as Associate Dean for Professional, Community, and Strategic Relations, he oversees the UUSOD Associated Provider network for Medicaid, advocating for innovative Medicaid programs at both state and national levels. He has also played a significant role in organizing dental hygiene collaborations and leading clinical trials focused on pediatric dentistry.

David McMillan, DDS | Associate Professor - Public Health and Community Outreach, Roseman University of Health Sciences



Dr. McMillan earned his DDS from the University of the Pacific School of Dentistry in 2004 and began his career practicing with his father in Layton, Utah. He joined Roseman University College of Dental Medicine in 2014 as an adjunct professor and transitioned to a full-time academic role in 2016. Dr. McMillan has served as President of the Utah Academy of General Dentistry and currently serves as its secretary, and he is a co-advisor for the Roseman Student AGD. His scholarly work includes six peer-reviewed publications focused on dental education, the zirconia wing bridge, and care for underserved populations. At Roseman, he oversees public health, community outreach, and interprofessional education. He lives in Herriman, Utah, with his wife and three daughters.

ORAL HEALTH PANEL

Danyelle Evans, RDH | Mobile Dental Hygiene of St. George

Danyelle Evans is a passionate advocate for oral health and a seasoned professional with over 25 years in dentistry. Since becoming a Registered Dental Hygienist in 2005, and earning her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration & Healthcare Management in 2023, she has dedicated her career to expanding access to care, particularly for vulnerable populations.



As the Legislative Chair for the Utah Dental Hygienists' Association (UDHA), Danyelle has been instrumental in advancing the profession. Her proudest accomplishments include leading the successful passage of direct access legislation and securing Medicaid reimbursement for dental hygiene services in public health settings in Utah. These landmark achievements ensure that vulnerable individuals can directly access essential preventive and therapeutic care.

Further demonstrating her commitment to systemic change, Danyelle serves nationally as a State Representative for the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN). Locally, she actively contributes to her community through her involvement with Red Rock Center for Independence, The Well Pregnancy Resource Center, and Root for Kids as well as maintaining one day a week in private practice and operating Mobile Dental Hygiene of St. George.

UNDERSERVED UTAHNS PANEL

As we begin 2026, there are significant challenges facing underserved communities. There have been major policy changes for Utahns who deal with substance use disorder, homelessness, and the criminal justice system. Changes in federal Medicaid policy will make access to care more difficult for many Utahns. Our panel of experts will discuss ways to move forward and ensure that all Utahns have access to quality, affordable health care.

Moderator



Evan Done | Advocacy & Public Policy Director, Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness (USARA)

Evan Done is a person in long-term recovery from both a substance use and co-occurring mood disorder. He currently serves as the Advocacy & Public Policy Director at the Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness (USARA), which he initially joined as a volunteer in 2015. Evan is on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors for the national advocacy organization Faces & Voices of Recovery, and in 2024 he was appointed by Governor Spencer Cox to serve as the representative of a person with lived experience of substance use disorder to serve on Utah's newly formed Behavioral Health Commission. With extensive experience in the non-profit sector and over twenty years of experience in social justice advocacy, he is dedicated to creating a more equitable, just, and sustainable world.

UNDERSERVED UTAHNS PANEL

Rebecca Brown | Deputy Executive Director of the Utah Department of Corrections



Rebecca Brown became Deputy Executive Director of the Utah Department of Corrections in August 2023. With almost 25 years in community-based and non-profit settings, Rebecca has been key in recidivism reduction, reentry planning, and public safety. Her work at the Salt Lake County Jail and community treatment programs has informed innovative rehabilitation and reintegration approaches. As an executive leader, Rebecca focuses on improving health and life outcomes for justice-involved individuals while balancing stakeholder experience, rehabilitation, and public safety. She is dedicated to systemic reform, interagency collaboration, and evidence-based practices for individual and public well-being.

Julie Ewing | State Medicaid Director

Julie Ewing was announced by Governor Spencer Cox as the new director of Utah Medicaid at the Department of Health and Human Services in November 2025. At the time of her appointment, she was the director of compliance for the University of Utah Health Plans, where she was responsible for ensuring compliance with state and federal law and overseeing the Special Investigations Unit monitoring for fraud, waste, and abuse.



Before her time at the University of Utah Health Plans, Ewing spent six years at Utah Medicaid, culminating in her role as the director of the Bureau of Managed Health Care, where she helped implement the Medicaid Accountable Care Organization model and oversaw the managed care plans for Medicaid and CHIP. Ewing is a licensed attorney in the state of Utah, having worked as an Assistant Attorney General for 10 years and representing various state agencies. She graduated from the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law.

UNDERSERVED UTAHNS PANEL

Adam Cohen | President & CEO, Odyssey House

Adam Cohen is the CEO of Odyssey House, a non-profit behavioral health organization serving individuals and families affected by substance use and mental health disorders through a full continuum of behavioral health care and primary care services. Mr. Cohen earned a bachelor degree in economics and a master degree in business administration. He has worked in behavioral health since 2000 and has been President and CEO of Odyssey House since 2009.



Mr. Cohen is a Commissioner on the Utah Behavioral Health Commission, Secretary of Treatment Communities of America, Immediate Past President of Utah Association of Behavioral Health Organizations, and the Vice Chair of the Salt Lake County Alcohol and Drug Coordinating Council.

Previously, Mr. Cohen was the Chair of the Utah Board of Juvenile Justice, President of Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness (USARA), member of the Utah Department of Health Medicaid Advisory Committee, a member of the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, and served as a member for the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

LEGISLATIVE PANEL

The 2026 Legislative Session begins next week with important health policy issues to be discussed. Our panel of legislators will share their thoughts on the policy landscape and potential legislation to be considered in the upcoming legislative session. This will be an important opportunity to listen to and ask questions of Utah's health policy leaders in the Utah Legislature.

Moderator



Steve Eliason | Representative - Utah District 43

Representative Steve Eliason has served in the Utah House of Representatives since 2011. He represents House District 43. Steve resides in Sandy City with his wife and is the father of six children. He has served as the Chair of the House Revenue and Taxation Committee and is currently the House Chair of the Public Education Appropriations Committee. He serves on the House Health & Human Services Committee and Co-Chaired the Governor's Youth Suicide Prevention Taskforce with the current Governor of Utah, Spencer Cox.

Rep. Eliason has passed over 100 bills during his tenure in the Legislature on topics ranging from election reform, public safety, education, public health, tax reform and has passed over 50 bills relating to suicide prevention and improving the lives of people with a mental illness.

LEGISLATIVE PANEL

Jim Dunnigan | Representative - Utah District 36



Representative Dunnigan has served in the Utah State Legislature since 2003. He currently serves on the Criminal Justice Appropriations Subcommittee and the House Business and Labor Committee. He has previously served on the Taylorsville City Council. Rep. Dunnigan has a degree in Business Management from the University of Utah and works as an insurance agency owner.

Raymond Ward | Representative - Utah District 19



Representative Ray Ward M.D.-PhD. has served in the Utah House of Representatives since 2015 representing Bountiful. He serves as the House Chair of the Social Services Appropriations Committee. He focuses his legislative efforts on medical issues to make sure that the State Medicaid program runs well, and to lower the cost of housing. He is a family physician in private practice at Cope Family Medicine/Ogden Clinic and enjoys working with Medicare and Medicaid patients. He also treats patients who have difficulties with substance abuse. He and his wife Beverly like math and pickleball and plug-in solar panels and hanging out with their 4 year old grand-daughter.

Verona Mauga | Representative - Utah District 31



Verona Mauga serves in the Utah House of Representatives for District 31 in West Valley City and Taylorsville. She previously worked as a provider in residential mental and behavioral health care, supporting women navigating substance use, addiction, mental health challenges, and individuals with disabilities. A small business owner and active community leader, she brings firsthand experience with how healthcare systems, Medicaid, and social services intersect in people's daily lives.

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