



Utah Probation and Parole: Mental Health Training Needs

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)ⁱ is a partnership between the University of North Dakota and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and serves the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming (Region 8). Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)ⁱⁱ, the Mountain Plains MHTTC is a five-year program focused on providing free training, products, and technical assistance to individuals serving persons with mental health disorders. In partnership with SAMHSA and state probation and parole offices, the Mountain Plains MHTTC team conducted an electronic survey in December 2019 to assess mental health training needs among probation and parole officers in the six-state region. Results from the survey will inform the development of new products, training materials, and technical assistance (TA). For more information, read the completed report, [Mental Health Training and Technical Assistance Needs: Findings, Implications, and Summary of a Survey of Probation and Parole Officers in Region 8](#).

Probation and Parole in Utah

Approximately 126 probation and parole officers in Utah completed the electronic survey. Respondents were predominantly male (70%) and between the ages of 30-49 (69%). Roughly 78% worked in urban/suburban settings while 21% worked in rural areas. A majority (66%) worked in both probation and parole with an additional 18% working solely in probation. Roughly 41% had been working in the field 11-20 years.

Knowledge and Experience

In the last 12 months, a greater proportion of officers had attended a training on substance use disorder (86%) than on mental health (81%). When compared to probation and parole officers in all of Region 8, a greater proportion of officers in Utah had access to Narcan (85%) and knew how to administer Narcan to reverse an opioid overdose (83%). See Figure 1 and Table 1. However, a much smaller percentage of officers in Utah compared to all of Region 8 knew of trauma-informed care (67% compared to 80% in all of Region 8).

Figure 1. Access to Narcan/Naloxone

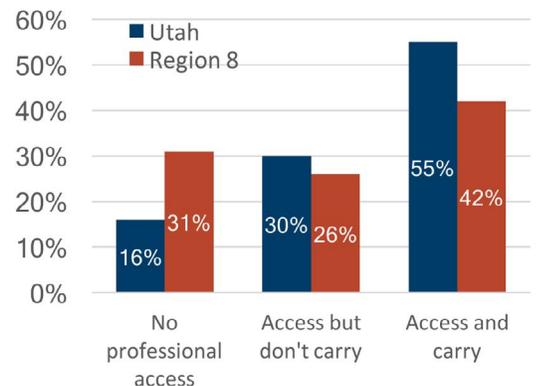


Table 1. Percent of Officers Who Strongly Agree/Agree

	Utah	Region 8
I know what trauma-informed care is	67%	80%
I can recognize signs of suicide risk	83%	89%
I know how to help someone calm down from a crisis state of mind	82%	85%
I can recognize the signs of addiction	94%	95%
I can recognize signs of a drug overdose	90%	83%
I know how to administer Narcan to reverse an opioid overdose	83%	67%

Training and Technical Assistance Needs

Participants identified the priority for training or TA on a variety of topics. Each topic was rated as not a current need, would be helpful, high priority, or not applicable/unsure. Probation and parole officers identified different training needs when exploring topics identified as high priority (Table 2) compared to those identified as either helpful or high priority (Table 3). When looking at only high priority topics, staff recruitment and retention were identified in the top five but were not included when looking at the top five topics combining either high priority or helpful. Instead, when combining need categories, probation and parole officers in Utah identified wanting more training or TA on the topic of employment issues for individuals with mental illness, including job placement and support services.

Table 2. Top Topic Priorities Indicated as High Priority

	Utah	Region 8
1. Staff retention	65%	45%
2. Staff recruitment ^a	55%	37%
3. Mental health and substance abuse (co-occurring) ^a	55%	48%
4. Permanent supportive housing resources	49%	42%
5. Compassion fatigue/burnout	47%	40%

^a Staff recruitment and substance abuse co-occurring tied at 55%

Table 3. Top Topic Priorities Indicated as Helpful Topics or High Priority

	Utah	Region 8
1. Mental health and substance abuse (co-occurring) ^a	94%	93%
2. Employment issues and solutions for individuals with mental illness ^a	94%	86%
3. Permanent supportive housing resources ^a	94%	88%
4. Mental health and intellectual disabilities (co-occurring) ^b	92%	92%
5. Effects of psychotropic medications ^b	92%	87%

^a Top three topics tied at 94% ^b Intellectual co-occurring and psychotropic medications tied at 92%

In addition to priority topics, the survey asked probation and parole officers to identify which populations (if any) they would like additional training or consultation about to improve their professional efforts in the field of mental health. Participants could select multiple populations from a list of 25. Overall, the top priority populations for Utah were similar to those of Region 8.

Table 4. Top Priority Populations

	Utah	Region 8	Region 8 Rank
1. People who are homeless/transient	58%	55%	2
2. People with serious mental illness	55%	59%	1
3. People with substance use disorder (addiction)	53%	53%	3
4. People with serious emotional disturbance	48%	49%	4
5. Adults (ages 18-64)	46%	37%	8

¹Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center: <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/home>.

[#]Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov>.