

# What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



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

**UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project**

Davis 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), Davis County, the Davis County Health Department, and the Utah State University Davis County Extension hosted a think tank 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 2023 gathering of 35 leaders in Davis County. 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: education, home and family, government and community engagement, business and economics, and culture.

### EDUCATION

Leaders in Davis 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 college plays in a woman’s life. Recommendations for schools and the community include:

- Emphasize reaching families who do not attend parent-teacher conferences or look at emails, who miss information about opportunities and resources because of language barriers, and who work two or three jobs. Build a communications strategy to reach people where they are.
- Expose students to role models, including female STEM educators, and provide mentoring programs in elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Give all students the chance to be the spokesperson for groups so everyone develops leadership skills.
- Highlight leadership education, including having Girls’ State at the county level.
- Increase STEM offerings in girls’ education.
- Install a Title IX office at every school, not just at the district level.
- Partner and spread the word about good things happening in public education and have residents and nonprofits help promote it.
- Prioritize teacher retention, including raising salaries.

- Publicize about the Catalyst Center as a great resource for youth.
- Raise awareness of resources, and train teachers, counselors, and administrators to guide students to helpful resources.
- Respect public school teachers by not assuming they are teaching children their own agenda. Legislators should be partners, not obstacles, to education.
- Set up onsite childcare at Davis Technical College to remove a major barrier to education for women.

### HOME & FAMILY

In Davis County, parents are recognized as one of the most powerful influences in the lives of their daughters. Recommendations for parents and society include:

- Build self-confidence in girls beginning at a young age, and help girls and women recognize they have responsibility for their own self-confidence.
- Discuss the variety of opportunities available to daughters.
- Empower parents with parenting classes through community organizations, and let parents know about existing parenting resources.
- Have stable housing for children.
- Help girls learn to advocate for and stand up for themselves.
- Promote healthy relationships in the home so daughters can see how they should be treated by a partner and will look for a partner who will respect them.
- Recognize domestic abuse as verbal, nonverbal, financial, and physical.
- Track county-specific data about the number of parents home with their children after school.
- Value and respect those who choose to be homemakers.

## GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The importance of involving girls and women in civic activities and getting support from government in Davis County emerged as primary themes. Recommendations for government and the community include:

- Appreciate that diversity in politics is best for all and that giving opportunities to some does not take away from others.
- Create and share a list of proposed bills to watch that relate to women's issues.
- Coach women on running for political office and refer them to existing programs.
- Educate elected officials on women's issues by asking for meetings and writing letters and emails. Contact legislators so laws are passed that relate to your needs.
- Engage at the grassroots level to get people involved and voting, including young women. Vote so you have a voice.
- Establish a traveling federal background check process to help military spouses and others quickly enter the workforce after relocating.
- Facilitate in-home childcare to reduce barriers by reducing costs and regulations. Streamline the licensing process to keep children safe without discouraging applicants.
- Have adopt-a-youth — the reverse of adopt-a-grandparent — to help provide support to youth.
- Promote and expand the understanding that community resources are for all people, regardless of socioeconomic status. Remove the stigma and make it okay to ask for help.
- Put together a directory to help individuals and families connect to resources.
- Reduce barriers to women's preventative care by spreading awareness of help such as a respite nursery.
- Work through youth councils and youth courts to influence youth.

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Davis County women struggle with limited professional opportunities, as well as with childcare and equity barriers. Recommendations for employers include:

- Advance opportunities for young women to job shadow and do internships to give exposure to a variety of professional fields.
- Create pathways to leadership for women within companies.
- Don't base pay on what an applicant's salary was at their last job; look at national salaries and do pay parity audits to reduce the gender pay gap.
- Elevate women's voices in the boardroom.
- Have family-friendly workplace policies and encourage co-parenting. Model good examples for others to learn.
- Increase transparency in wages.
- Provide benefits to part-time employees who support their families financially.
- Recognize that projects may appeal to older women over full-time work.

- Reduce childcare barriers by implementing practices such as offering non-traditional childcare (e.g., squads that help each other at Hill Air Force Base), adjusting childcare rates relative to income levels, having employers match childcare expenses in lieu of other benefits, and working with legislators to have a pilot program to step down childcare benefits.
- Value women's talents coming into the workforce after raising children and translate their skills to real jobs.

## CULTURE

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

- Comment on and work to develop a girl's skills and abilities instead of appearance to instill self-confidence.
- Create awareness that leads to action by knowing and sharing the data about women's issues. Educate the community by inviting others to our homes; presenting at local city meetings and other gatherings and conferences; putting information on social media; and using influencers.
- Decrease the shame that is part of our culture as it hides and disempowers.
- Don't punish women for voicing their needs.
- Emphasize empowering women of lower socioeconomic situations.
- Empower women to know who they are and talk about feminism without using the word. Describe it in terms of desired actions and outcomes so it is a fight against an issue, not a person.
- Fill the gap, don't just bridge issues.
- Help women have emotional intelligence to handle tough situations. Start in the early ages with resilience.
- Include men in important gender conversations so they can be male allies.
- Involve ecclesiastical leaders and the religious community to have a real impact, including addressing church language regarding women. Change must start at the ground level.
- Question cultural beliefs around traditional roles, and don't impose those on girls or women.
- Teach girls and women how to communicate effectively.

## CONCLUSION

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

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