



Spencer J. Cox
Governor

EXECUTIVE ORDER
2026-07

Establishing the Recovery Utah Initiative

WHEREAS, recovery from homelessness, addiction, and mental illness is possible;

WHEREAS, Utah is committed to building a state where hope is backed by action;

WHEREAS, compassion and service, partnered with accountability, are essential to addressing homelessness in our state;

WHEREAS, Utah's focus on recovery is working: in 2026, overall homelessness in Utah declined 1.6%, fatal overdoses declined 9.3%, and unsheltered homelessness declined 9.7%;

WHEREAS, despite these improvements, there are areas where continued focus is needed;

WHEREAS, the State's homelessness strategy is driven by three foundational pillars, (1) Accountability for High Utilizers in the Criminal Justice System, (2) Emergency Shelter & Affordable Housing, and (3) Mental & Behavioral Health Infrastructure, which serve as the guiding principles for state policy, interagency alignment, and strategic financial investment;

WHEREAS, the Recovery Utah Initiative is the implementation engine for goals embedded in "Built Here," my second term strategic roadmap, including reducing drug deaths by 25%, cutting the number of people who exit custody into homelessness by 25%, increasing inpatient beds for serious mental illness by 10%, and building 150,000 new housing units by 2029;

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Utah appropriated over \$40 million in 2026 in support of these priorities, reflecting a shared commitment to help communities, families, and individuals heal;

WHEREAS, the resources, programs, and goodwill to address homelessness exist across Utah, but too often operate in isolation, producing fragmented outcomes for people who need coordinated support;

WHEREAS, Utah's diverse faith communities, churches, and religious organizations represent a vital, compassionate frontline, carrying a deep moral mandate and unmatched grassroots presence to serve those experiencing homelessness;

WHEREAS, a capable team of state entities, local governments, religious and philanthropic institutions, private entities, and federal partners are working tirelessly to resolve homelessness;

WHEREAS, Utah is home to thousands of people who have battled back from homelessness, mental illness, and the chronic disease of addiction, and their personal experience and hard-won expertise are among the most valuable assets our state has in solving this crisis; and

WHEREAS, The Recovery Utah Initiative, grounded in the three pillars of this strategy, will demonstrate that coordination, aligning resources, eliminating duplication, and holding all partners accountable to shared outcomes are keys to success;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Spencer J. Cox, Governor of the state of Utah, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of this state, do hereby order the following:

1. **Purpose.** The purposes of this Executive Order are to:
 - a. Establish the Recovery Utah Initiative to implement the Three Pillars in an effort to help Utah individuals, families, and communities struggling with homelessness, poverty, addiction, and mental illness find a path to recovery and success;
 - b. Strengthen agency collaboration on Utah's strategic goals; and
 - c. Facilitate a coordinated response between local government, faith-based communities, the healthcare sector, and the private sector to address homelessness.
2. **Application.** This order applies to certain state agencies, as defined below.
3. **Definitions.** As used in this order:
 - a. "Agency"
 - i. Agency includes the following entities within the state executive branch:
 1. the Department of Commerce;
 2. the Department of Corrections;
 3. the Department of Health and Human Services;
 4. the Department of Criminal Justice;
 5. the Department of Public Safety;
 6. the Department of Workforce Services;
 7. the Division of Housing and Community Development;
 8. the Office of Homeless Services; and
 9. Any other department, division, office, bureau, or other organization within the state executive branch, if invited by the Council described below.
 - ii. Agency does not include:
 1. an institution of higher education;
 2. the Utah Board of Higher Education;
 3. the State Board of Education;
 4. an independent entity as defined in Utah Code § 63E-1-102;
 5. the Attorney General's Office;
 6. the State Auditor's Office;
 7. the State Treasurer's Office;
 8. the Legislative Branch; or
 9. the Judicial Branch.
 - b. "Three Pillars" means the three pillars of the State's homelessness strategy, which are:
 - i. Accountability for High Utilizers in the Criminal Justice System;
 - ii. Emergency Shelter & Affordable Housing; and
 - iii. Mental & Behavioral Health Infrastructure.

4. Recovery Utah Initiative Council.

- a. This Order establishes the Recovery Utah Initiative Council (“Council”) to be comprised of the following individuals:
 - i. the Governor’s Senior Advisor for Homelessness, who also serves as State Homeless Coordinator, as chair of the Council;
 - ii. Two vice-chairs with lived experience in homelessness, selected by the Governor’s Senior Advisor for Homelessness;
 - iii. at least one representative from the faith community, selected to unify and integrate faith-based outreach, programs, and community-level support into statewide strategies, selected by the Governor’s Senior Advisor for Homelessness;
 - iv. the chair of the Utah Homeless Services Board;
 - v. the commissioner of the Department of Commerce or the commissioner’s designee;
 - vi. the commissioner of the Department of Corrections or the commissioner’s designee;
 - vii. the commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services or the commissioner’s designee;
 - viii. the commissioner of the Department of Criminal Justice or the commissioner’s designee;
 - ix. the commissioner of the Department of Public Safety or the commissioner’s designee;
 - x. the commissioner of the Department of Workforce Services or the commissioner’s designee;
 - xi. the Senior Advisor on Housing Strategy and Innovation;
 - xii. the Chair of the Behavioral Health Commission or the chair’s designee; and
 - xiii. a representative of any other agency, as needed to accomplish the Council’s objectives, as invited by the Senior Advisor for Homelessness in consultation with the Governor’s Office.
- b. Members of the Council will meet as determined by the chair to:
 - i. Prioritize issues in the Three Pillars framework for focused efforts;
 - ii. Identify opportunities for greater cross-agency and cross-issue collaboration around homelessness policy areas;
 - iii. No later than October 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, provide a report to the Governor and the Health and Human Services Interim Committee on the progress of this Executive Order.
- c. The Council shall establish criteria for the Recovery-Ready designation, provide technical assistance to participating municipalities, and prioritize designated Recovery-Ready Communities for relevant state-administered grant opportunities and interagency resource alignment.

5. State Homelessness Coordinator. The State Homelessness Coordinator shall:

- a. Serve as chair of the Council and facilitate quarterly Council meetings;
- b. Guide the development and implementation of goals related to the Three Pillars;
- c. Invite representatives from local governments, the private sector, non-profit institutions, and religious organizations to participate in Council discussions;
- d. Select the members of the council subject to the criteria listed above;
- e. Coordinate the preparation and dissemination of homelessness data across state agencies; and
- f. Provide general support to the activities of the Council.

6. **Agencies.** Agencies shall:
- As invited by the Council, present on efforts regarding the Three Pillars at Council meetings;
 - Bring challenges and needs to the Council for dialogue and collaborative solution identification;
 - Receive recommendations from the Council to enhance coordination and statewide alignment and incorporate them as appropriate; and
 - Collaboratively participate in the discussions and activities of the Council and its partners to the fullest extent possible.
7. **Local Governments and Recovery-Ready Communities.** County and city governments are key leaders in building a supportive environment for individuals and families seeking help. Local governments are invited and encouraged to:
- Pursue Recovery-Ready Community Designation: Cities and counties may apply to the Council to be designated as a "Recovery-Ready Community." To qualify, a municipality or county shall demonstrate a framework that removes barriers to care and strengthens resources across the entire continuum, including prevention, treatment, and recovery support.
 - Treat the local response comprehensively by measuring and improving outcomes across four core areas:
 - Public Health: Expanding access to behavioral health services, overdose prevention, and addiction treatment;
 - Public Safety: Strengthening accountability and public safety efforts within the local criminal justice system;
 - Education & Youth Support: Providing school and community-based prevention and family support resources; and
 - Economic Viability: Promoting stable housing, workforce re-entry, and economic mobility for individuals in recovery.
 - Align local land use, housing, criminal justice, and health investments with the Recovery Utah Initiative and participate in interagency Council discussions through designated local representatives.
8. **Other Entities.** Other entities, including private sector partners, non-profits, and religious organizations are invited to:
- Partner with the state on investments and other efforts to help individuals, families, and communities recover; and
 - Participate in interagency coordination efforts through designated representatives.

THIS ORDER is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until otherwise modified, amended, rescinded, or superseded.



ATTEST:

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Utah on this, the 21st day of September, 2026.

Spencer J. Cox
Governor

Deidre M. Henderson
Lieutenant Governor