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*“Teen Centers offer a safe way for students to access help at the place we most want them to be—school.” - [The Policy Project](#)*

Utah high schools can build or improve services such as **food pantries, laundry facilities, and showers to meet the basic needs of our students** through a public-private partnership between the Utah Legislature and private donors.

These “Teen Centers” can be created by **repurposing existing, underutilized space within high schools** and by dedicating space for these services within newly built high schools.

Because every Utah community is unique, the Teen Center solution is **adaptable to fit local needs**, as determined by local leaders.

## FAQ's

**Need and Usage:** How many PCHS students are anticipated to use the Teen Center, and what data supports the need for this facility?

This facility will be available to all students at PCHS, with usage anticipated to vary depending on student circumstances and needs. The Utah Legislature drew upon the 2021 Utah Adolescent Health Report when appropriating the \$15m grant program, indicating Utah's students' rising mental health challenges, homelessness, food insecurity, and suicidal ideations.

**Facility Design and Future Use:** How is the facility expected to serve students both now and 5-10 years into the future, and how does it differ from existing services like the intervention counselor, school social worker, and guidance counselors?

The Teen Center Project legislation funding aims to provide vulnerable students with a safe space to address their physiological and mental health needs. This initiative aims to connect students with existing services as well as community resources, providing essential support and improving their overall well-being and academic performance.



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**Operational Costs:** What are the anticipated ongoing maintenance and operational costs for the Teen Center, including staffing, supplies, and outreach?

It is not anticipated that the PCHS Teen Center would not necessitate additional staff, as the opening would coincide with the realignment and reassignment of positions. PCSD would continue to explore grants, donations and partnerships for the necessary supplies, as has been successful in other related endeavors.

**Funding:** If the USBE grant expires before the Teen Center opens, what alternative grants or funding sources can be pursued?

PCSD secured a \$250K Legislative grant and a \$30K grant from the Policy Project, both of which must be returned if the Teen Center isn't operational by June 30, 2025. The \$15m appropriation for Teen Centers in the 2023 Legislature is one-time funding and was not renewed.

**Accessibility and Staffing:** What are the proposed hours of operation, and what adult staffing will be in place during these hours? Will the center be accessible only to PCSD students or to the broader community?

The Teen Center will be available for PCHS students only. As the Teen Center would serve as a hub for multiple services, we anticipate a number of offices and adult staffing would be available. Particular hours of operation will be determined as part of the continued planning process.

**Impact on Current Programs:** What solutions are in place for current faculty and staff displaced by the construction of the Teen Center, particularly in terms of classroom space and resource access?

The current woodshop program will be relocated to the new Construction Tech center beginning in the Fall of 2024. Multiple requests for the space have been received; the construction of a Teen Center would not negate the importance of seeking solutions to the needs and space for existing programs.

**Code Compliance and Costs:** What are the required code compliance improvements for the proposed Teen Center space, and who is the ultimate authority on these requirements?



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According to Chief Operating Officer Michael Tanner, if approved, the Teen Center would require architectural and engineering work that would also trigger a number of other requirements with which to comply, including filtering, sprinklers, electrical etc. Code requirements are set by Summit County and the State of Utah. COO Mike Tanner would ultimately oversee the compliance; however, the decision about the use of the space is determined by the PCSD Board of Education - a decision based on input, recommendations from leadership, best practices, and fiscal responsibility.

**Internal Communications:** Why were key community members under the impression that the Teen Center project was on hold, and how will communication be improved moving forward?

The PCSD Board of Education determines decisions regarding the creation of a Teen Center and requires adhering to their timelines. This may have been interpreted as a delay or “on hold,” but it is the process followed in PCSD. We can not speak to the interpretations of other personnel, and we hope that this FAQ will improve communication moving forward.

**Alternative Locations:** What other locations, such as the existing Learning Center building or portable classrooms, have been considered for the Teen Center, and what are the pros and cons of these alternatives?

Multiple locations were considered before the recommendation of the current woodshop space was put forth, including the main office area and the Learning Center. The woodshop space rose to the top of the recommendations due to a number of factors including its location, access, privacy (avoiding stigmas), and financial resources needed to construct. Additionally, this recommendation was brought forth by the school administration as the preferred option. The PCSD BOE has requested additional information about the recommendation, including costs and options, which will be presented at the June 18, 2024 meeting.

**Balancing Needs:** How does the Teen Center proposal balance with the needs of existing PCHS and Eccles programming, including performing arts, music, and athletics?

The Teen Center's goal is to address immediate physical needs and longer-term mental health and community support. Its goal is to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for high school students, thereby laying a foundation for participation in other opportunities available, such as performing arts, music, and athletics.



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## From March 9, 2023 KSL [Utah legislature gives \\$15 million for teen centers in high schools. How will they work?](#)

### Summary of Legislation:

Utah's legislature has allocated \$15 million to establish new teen centers in high schools, with an additional \$3 million raised privately. High schools in Utah can apply for grants of up to \$250,000 to create these centers, and the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) manages the grant system.

### Importance:

The legislation aims to provide vulnerable students with a safe space to address their physiological and mental health needs. This initiative aims to connect students with community resources, providing essential support and improving their overall well-being and academic performance.

### Types of Services:

- **Basic Amenities:** Showers, washer and dryer, grab-and-go food.
- **Supportive Adult Presence:** A trusted adult in the center will connect students with necessary resources, such as mental health support and housing options.

### Supporting Data:

- **Community Needs:** For example, in Carbon County, 60% of students come from homes where caregivers are addicted to opioids, significantly impacting their lives.
- **Homelessness:** In Tooele School District, about 200 students are classified as homeless, but the actual number of students who could benefit from the teen center is estimated to be between 400 and 600.
- **Pilot Programs:** Some districts already have pilot programs or food pantries, demonstrating an existing need and framework for these centers.
- **Rural Focus:** Prioritizing rural communities and high-poverty areas to ensure the most impact.

## Potential Impact:

- **Improved Student Well-being:** Providing a place for students to meet basic needs and receive support.
- **Reduction in Stigma:** Creating a judgment-free space where students can access resources without shame.
- **Enhanced Community Support:** Strengthening connections between schools and community resources leads to comprehensive support for vulnerable students.

The teen centers aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Utah's high school students by addressing both immediate physical needs and longer-term mental health and community support.

From the May 27, 2024, Salt Lake Tribune: "[Opinion: Utah's teens are struggling. One school program is saving lives.](#)"

## Summary:

### Addressing Teenage Mental Health:

Teenage mental health issues are complex, requiring more than just warnings and policies. Studies equate the impact of loneliness and social isolation to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The 2021 Utah Adolescent Health Report highlights alarming statistics:

- Over 20% of students have seriously considered suicide.
- 18% have made a suicide plan.
- 41.5% felt sad or hopeless.
- Utah teens face mental health problems at a rate 14% higher than the national average.
- The number of teens experiencing major depressive episodes has doubled in the last decade.

### Rising Homelessness and Economic Challenges:

- A 9.6% increase in student homelessness from 2022 to 2023, with 13,049 homeless students in 2023.
- One in three students qualify for free or reduced lunches.



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## **Teen Centers: A Solution:**

To combat these challenges, Teen Centers are being established in schools across Utah. These centers provide:

- Basic needs: food pantries, laundry facilities, and showers.
- Support: help with homework, social work, family advocacy, and connections to community resources.
- Trusted adults: staff who can prevent and alleviate mental health issues.

## **Funding and Implementation:**

- Since 2022, The Policy Project secured \$15 million from the Utah Legislature and raised \$3 million privately.
- By 2024, \$18 million was allocated to construct and open Teen Centers in over 70 schools across Utah.

## **Importance and Goals:**

Teen Centers aim to help students succeed in all areas of life by providing a safe and supportive environment. They connect teens to resources and opportunities, helping them navigate challenges and prepare for a successful future. These centers are an investment in the well-being and future leadership of Utah's youth.