



# Utah's Crisis Nurseries

A Vital Service for Families and Children

March 2021

Prepared by



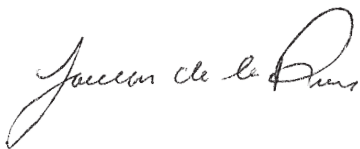
## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SALT LAKE COUNTY FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Utah's crisis nurseries play a vital part in protecting children and supporting parents. As the executive director over the Salt Lake County nurseries, I get a first row seat to the paramount work Utah's crisis nurseries are accomplishing throughout the state. The staff and volunteers at each nursery are incredibly dedicated and compassionate, creating a safe haven for each family seeking services.

Just this past summer, a single mother of two fled to Utah to escape life-threatening domestic violence. With no support and insufficient income, this mother faced a pandemic, earthquake, homelessness, and continued threats from her abuser. She sought services at our nursery, which became a lifeline of support and respite. She described the nursery as a "safe environment, where my children can forget about the daily struggles of life. I am grateful that I have a place I can call when I am feeling stressed out and need time to figure out my own issues."

This mother has broken free of her abuser and now has a stable job and is raising her children in an environment absent of abuse and fear. Like this mother, Utah's families need our support. Please spread the word about our nursery services, advocate for our continued legislative funding, and contact us for other ways you can help.

Our children need us.



Jocelyn De La Rosa  
Executive Director

## INTRODUCTION

Crisis nursery services provide temporary, emergency care for children. When parents are in crisis or experiencing heavy caregiving burdens, nurseries provide immediate stress relief and safe care for their children. The overarching goal is to prevent child abuse and neglect—oftentimes, the nurseries are the only safe childcare option available. Nursery services are free and confidential, allowing parents to acquire safe and affordable care without relinquishing legal custody.

We present this report as a status update on Utah's crisis nursery services to government leaders and community partners. We hope to heighten awareness of nurseries throughout the state, enabling more families to use our services. They are not alone. With a network of 17 locations throughout the state, nurseries provide a safe haven for families: reducing caregiver stress, preventing out-of-home placements, decreasing the risk for abuse and neglect, and preserving the family unit.

In 2020, there were 10,564 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect in Utah. There is more work to be done. Families need continued access to crisis nursery services and we need YOUR support and YOUR advocacy. Contact your local crisis nursery for ideas on how you can help. Together we can protect our children by keeping Utah's crisis nurseries available to all families.



# 6,234

children served in Utah's crisis nurseries



# 3,620

families served by Utah's crisis nurseries



# 40,846

total stays in Utah's Crisis nurseries



# 156,038

hours of care provided by Utah's crisis nurseries  
(all in Fiscal Year 2018-2019)

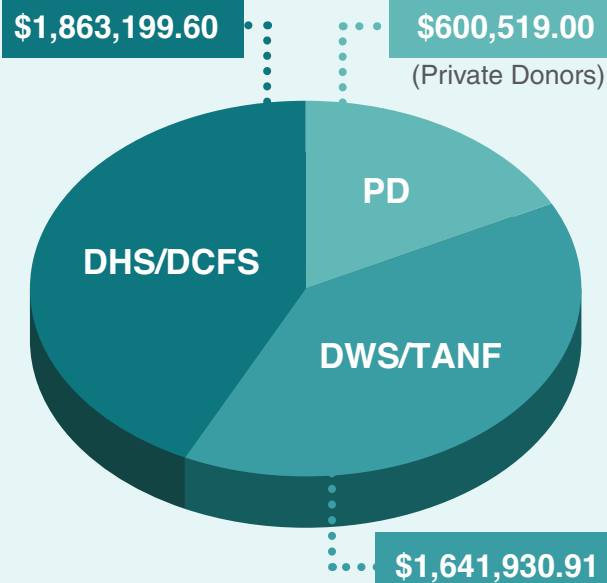


## ABOUT THE CRISIS NURSERIES

Crisis nurseries began in the 1960s to provide respite to parents and to prevent child abuse and neglect. Initially funded through private donations, nursery services have grown to be part of a nationwide strategy to support family wellness and protect children. In Utah, 17 crisis nurseries—strategically located throughout the state—are an integral part of the Department of Children and Family Services's plan to support family well-being and prevent child abuse and neglect. In 2020, \$2.5 million of federal and state funds were provided through DCFS for a network of community-based prevention services, including crisis nurseries (DCFS, 2020). In 2021, Utah's legislature expanded funding to \$2.8 million solely to support nurseries statewide.

## CRISIS NURSERY FUNDING

(Fiscal Year 2018-2019)



Utah's crisis nurseries provide free emergency care for up to 72 hours for children under 12 years of age. Services are available during daytime hours, but can be made available anytime of the day or night for emergencies; an on-call staff member takes calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Nurseries are more than

simply 'babysitting'; they provide specialized, trauma-informed care, meeting the physical and psychological needs of children—many children staying at the crisis nursery have or are experiencing trauma and have specialized needs. Each crisis nursery is designed as a family-style home to make the child feel as secure as possible. Nurseries include stocked kitchens, playrooms, bedrooms, and outdoor play areas. New clothing, well-balanced meals, diapers, and bedding are provided for each child. Specialized activities and toys are designed to reduce the effects of stress and trauma.

## A TYPICAL STAY AT THE NURSERY:

While each stay at the crisis nursery varies based on individual needs, a typical day consists of a combination of free play and teacher-directed activities. Staff engage children in craft time, storytime, and stress-reducing play. Outdoor time is utilized when the weather allows and three meals and snacks are served every day.



*"They take really good care of your kids. There's more workers for children as opposed to a normal daycare. So not only is it mental health time for mom having two hours away, but also they check in with your kids. They make sure they're doing good, if they have any concerns or anything, they let you know so that you can be alert too. So it's really great for everyone."* -Parent who used crisis nursery services

*"It's just an awesome place for your kids to go, and they're safe, they're well taken care of, they're attended to, and I just love how they interact with my kids and do fun things with my kids rather than sit them in front of a screen."* -Parent who used crisis nursery services

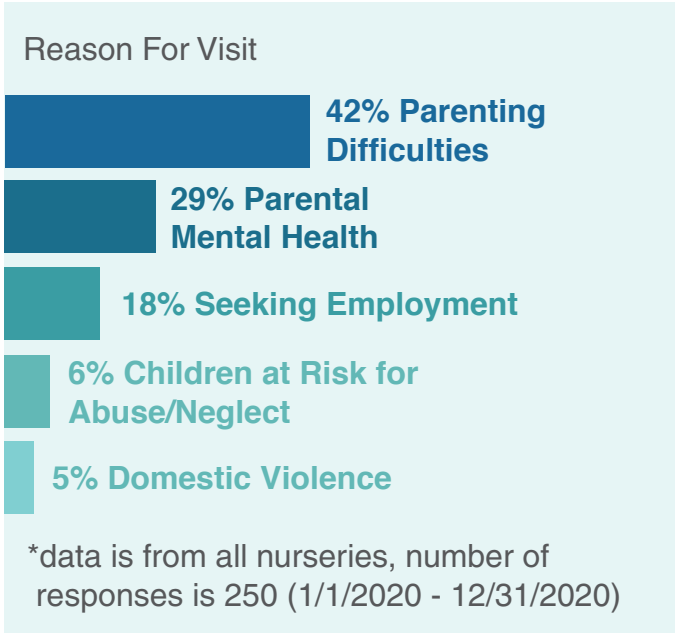
## OUTCOMES FROM CRISIS NURSERY SERVICES IN 2019

**76%** After using the nursery 76% of parents feel less stressed

**137** Before care, 137 children were at moderate, or more, risk of abuse

**62%** Without services from Utah's crisis nurseries, 62% of families served cannot access safe and reliable child care in an emergency.

## WHY PARENTS SEEK CRISIS NURSERY SERVICES




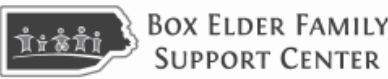









Some children only visit the crisis nursery once, during an extreme family emergency. Others visit the nursery on a scheduled respite plan for parents experiencing high caregiving burdens. For example, meet the Young family. The Young family has five children—all under the age of five, three of which are triplets. The parents have little support and have been utilizing the crisis nurseries for two years, as the mother has undergone extensive health issues and heavy caregiving burdens have fallen to the father. Last month, while the children were in nursery care, the father called, informing staff that the mother had been taken by an ambulance to the hospital with a severe intestinal infection. Nursery staff—who have built a strong relationship with the five children—gladly opened the nursery overnight, giving the father time to be with his wife in the hospital. The father later wrote,

*"Thank you for always being there when we need help the most. Last week, when my wife was taken by ambulance to the hospital, you guys were able to give us an entire day and night to deal with it. There was literally no one else that could help and do what you guys do! I can't thank you enough!"*

**UTAH'S CRISIS  
NURSERY NETWORK**

The Utah Association of Family Support Centers has 11 Family Support Centers under its umbrella, with 17 operating crisis nursery locations. Each center runs its own crisis nursery (or nurseries), meeting the unique needs of the families in its geographic location. In addition to nursery services, some locations offer parenting education, DCFS shelter services, and adoption respite.



	The Family Place	Smithfield
		Logan
		Hyrum
	Box Elder Family Support Center	Brigham City
		Garland
	Family Support Center of Ogden	Ogden
	Open Doors	Clearfield
 <small>Protecting children, strengthening families, and preventing child abuse.</small>	The Family Support Center	Sugar House
		West Valley City
		Midvale
	Family Support and Treatment Center	Orem
	Family Support Center of the Uintah Basin	Roosevelt
	Family Support Center of Carbon County	Price
	Grand County Family Support Center	Moab
	Family Support Center of Southwestern Utah	Cedar City
		Richfield
	Family Support Center of Washington County	Saint George

“When I moved to St. George, I had an undiagnosed mental disorder and was in active addiction and wanted to quit for me and my family. To do this, I needed to attend a group twice a week and go to individualized therapy. I moved to St. George due to a domestic violence concern with no job and no place to live. At this point, I had no idea how I was going to afford daycare to obtain the help I needed so greatly. My therapist referred me to the Family Support Center. Not only did they provide me with a place for my children to be safe while I got help, but when we finally got approved for housing, they assisted us with resources for food, dishes, clothing. To this day, our family is in a MUCH better place due to all the support not sure the same would be true if you all had not been so gracious and kind.”



## HOW YOU CAN HELP:

### Volunteer

We have opportunities to work with the children or for group service projects to improve the nursery facilities.

### Sponsor a donation drive

Nurseries provide diapers, formula and clothing to children in the nursery. Each nursery has different needs, so be sure to contact your local nursery to ask what supplies they need!

### Donate

Private donors fill the gap between expenses and government funding. We need your help!

### Advocate

Spread the word about our nurseries. Tell family and friends about our services. Contact your government representatives and ask them to continue funding nurseries across Utah.

Contact your local crisis nursery to see how YOU can help! We would love to hear any success stories you have: Please share at [volunteer@familysupportcenter.org](mailto:volunteer@familysupportcenter.org).