



**SAN JUAN COUNTY COALITION**

## **Strengthening San Juan County Communities through Prevention Healing and Hope Conference**

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### **Introduction & Purpose**

The Bolder Way Forward San Juan Coalition supported by Utah State University's Utah Women & Leaders Project seeks to provide evidence based suicide and substance abuse prevention strategies, prevent and support sexual assault/violence survivors, while training and sharing resources that are tailored to San Juan County's unique cultural, geographic, and demographic needs. The project is aligned with the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) and directly supports countywide prevention goals.

San Juan County continues to face elevated risk factors in sexual assault, exposure to sexual violence, substance misuse and abuse associated with an increase in suicide ideation. Other risk factors tied in include geographic isolation, limited access to behavioral health resources, high rates of trauma exposure, and youth vulnerability that lead to substance misuse . Community partners and school personnel frequently report the need for additional tools, culturally responsive training, and public awareness strategies.

This conference provides an essential platform to reach educators, service providers, tribal community members, youth advocates, and local leaders. By uniting voices of faith and community leaders with clinical expertise, we will work to support the community in creating safe, trusting, and destigmatizing spaces that will begin community conversations, create upstream prevention while supporting survivors and their families.

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## Objectives

1. **Evidence-based Education** - Including QPR, Means Safety messaging, upstream prevention strategies, and trauma-informed approaches.
2. **Culturally Responsive Strategies** - Content is designed to the unique needs of Navajo, Utah, and rural communities within San Juan County.
3. **Multi-sector Engagement & Destigmatizing Conversations** – Presenters will collaborate with community leaders, schools, behavioral health providers, tribal programs, and youth coalitions with shared language, tools, confidence and compassion and evidence-based approaches that encourage and help survivors and their families.
4. **Promote Whole-Body Healing** – Highlighting and supporting mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health as interconnected aspects of recovery and resilience for survivors and their families when reporting abuse.
5. **Bridge Building and Resource Sharing** – Strengthen families and partnerships between community organizations, health systems, faith leaders, community leaders and prevention coalitions for referral pathways, and prevention material.
6. **Practical Action Steps and Skill Building** – Provide leaders with actionable strategies for prevention, survivor support, and community resilience. Interactive components focused on recognizing warning signs, responding to crises, increasing protective factors, and reducing stigma..

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## Conference Structure

- **Keynote Speakers:**
  - *Survivor Advocate* (lived experience storyteller to foster empathy and authentic connection)
    - **Elizabeth Smart** - Nationally renown speaker
  - *Mental Health Professional* (expert in trauma, healing-centered engagement, victim Advocate and suicide prevention)
    - **Dr Susan Madsen** - USU / Utah Women & Leaders Project
    - **Ophelia Holiday** - UNHS / Victims Advocate

- Hunter Warren - UNHS / School Based Counselor
  - ReNee McDonald - SJSD / Student Advocate / School Social Worker / Coalition Co-lead
  - Tazbah Jackson - UNHS / Community Outreach
  - Thomasina Holly - UNHS / Community Outreach
  - India Eldridge - UNHS / School-based Counselor
  - Thomas Lyman\* - SJSD / LCSW
- *Faith Leader*
    - Melvin Tahonnie, Monument Valley
    - Brad Bunker, Stake President / Monticello Utah
    - Jeff Fitzgerald, Bishop, Monument Valley
    - Joe and Alyn Mitchell, Bishopric, White Mesa Branch
  - *Prevention in Practice*: Evidence-based programs within their communities
    - Robert Niewman - CJC / Director
    - Rebecca Benally - SJC Health Department - Community Outreach
    - Bayley Hedglin - Monticello, Utah Mayor / Woman's Advocate
    - Talia Hansen - SJC Economic Department - Manager
    - Trevor Olsen - University of Utah - School Based Mental Health Outreach

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## Partners & Sponsorship Opportunities

**Multiple partners and sponsors** to support upstream prevention, healing, and connection. Sponsors will receive recognition through flyers and signage advertisement, conference materials, and swag bags. Sponsors and potential partners include:

- Local coalitions
  - Bolder Way Forward
  - San Juan County Prevention, Action and Collaboration Coalition (SJCPAC)
  - San Juan Foundation
  - San Juan County Clean Energy Foundation
  - San Juan School District

- San Juan Counseling
- Hospitals & behavioral health providers
  - UNHS - Hunter Warren
  - San Juan Counseling - Gordon Kelley
  - Blue Mountain Hospital -
  - San Juan Hospital
- Tribal and interfaith organizations
  - White Mesa Southern Colorado Ute Tribe
  - Navajo Utah Commission
    - Chapter Leaders
- Universities & schools
  - San Juan School District - Christy Fitzgerald
    - AWARE Grant - Joanna Bethea
  - University of Utah - Trevor Olsen
  - Utah State University - Dr. Susan Madsen and Bayley Hedglin
- Law enforcement and Victim services agencies
  - SeekHaven
  - UCASA
  - OUR Rescue
  - Children's Justice Center - Robert Niemann
  - UNHS - Victim's advocate
    - Thomasina Holly
    - Tazbah Jackson
    - Ophelia Holliday
  - San Juan County Sheriff
  - Blanding Police Department
  - Saprea
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- Community Leadership
  - San Juan County
    - San Juan County Commissioners
    - Health Department - Rebecca Benally
  - Monticello City
    - Mayor - Bayley Hegdlin
  - Blanding
    - Mayor - Trevor Olsen
  - Montezuma Creek/Aneth

- Bluff
  - Monument Valley
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## Outcomes & Impact

- **Strengthen Local Capacity**
    - Early intervention, and crisis response in trauma-informed, healing-centered strategies presented to community leaders.
      - Youth 18 - 25 fall conference
      - Prevention coalition community workgroups working with local government to create and pass resolutions that gather support for stronger support and laws
      - Community support for school programs that assist with educating youth and families.
  - **Increased cross-sector collaboration**
    - among tribal entities, faith leaders, community leaders, service providers, and prevention specialists
      - Ongoing data collection
  - **Reduced stigma**
    - Increase community knowledge of suicide and sexual abuse warning signs and substance misuse with current prevention strategies
    - Increase protective factors for families and communities
  - **Sustainable prevention and response capacity**
    - Promote protective factors, resilience, and connectedness across San Juan County to create conversations.
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## Closing

This presentation will build long-term local capacity by training community members who can continue to promote suicide, substance misuse and sexual assault/violence prevention strategies increasing support for existing support, and creating new supports and outreach coordination. Materials and resource sheets will remain available to attendees and partner organizations. Evaluation results will guide future prevention planning and support additional opportunities.