FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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UTAH RECEIVES NATIONAL HONOR IN INJURY & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Utah Department of Public Health receives the Safe States Alliance 2012 “Innovative Initiative of the Year” Award for Drug Overdose Reporting System

Atlanta, GA – The Utah Department of Public Health was honored with the prestigious Innovative Initiative of the Year award from the Safe States Alliance during the national organization’s Annual Meeting held May 1-4, 2012 in Atlanta, GA.

The Innovative Initiative of the Year award is selected exclusively by the members of the Safe States Alliance – a national non-profit organization comprised of hundreds of injury and violence prevention professionals and experts. The Innovative Initiative of the Year award is presented to a Safe States member who has implemented a unique and creative program or activity that has the potential to substantially decrease injuries and violence in the communities that they serve.

In the past decade, Utah has experienced a more than 400% increase in deaths associated with misuse and abuse of prescription drugs, making prescription drug overdose the number one cause of injury deaths in Utah. Utah participates in the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), a surveillance system for suicides, homicides, unintentional firearm deaths, and deaths of undetermined intent (including undetermined drug overdose deaths but not unintentional). Until recently, data collection for unintentional and undetermined drug overdose deaths was limited to basic demographic variables collected by the Prescription Pain Medication Program (PPMP). In 2010, funding for the PPMP was eliminated, providing a need to integrate unintentional drug overdose deaths in the Utah NVDRS (UTVDRS).
Incorporating unintentional drug overdose data into the UTVDRS presented a unique opportunity to look at the complete picture of drug overdose deaths in Utah and an opportunity for continuity in data collection. The array of variables collected allowed Utah to understand the circumstances surrounding drug overdose deaths and focus prevention efforts throughout the state. Additionally, by expanding the utility of the UTVDRS to include these deaths, Utah can serve as a pilot for the CDC and other NVDRS states to demonstrate the benefits and obstacles of collecting this additional data. Integration of the PPMP data into the UTVDRS eliminated duplication of data collection, leveraged limited funding and staff resources, streamlined communication with the media and policy makers, and provided richer data.

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The [Safe States Alliance](http://www.safestates.org) is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to serving as the national voice in support of state and local injury and violence prevention professionals engaged in building a safer, healthier America. Founded in 1993, the Safe States Alliance is the only national non-profit organization comprised of public health injury prevention professionals representing all states and territories in the United States.

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