

UTAH**Rich Saunders****Executive Director**

Utah Department of Health



Richard Saunders is currently serving as the Executive Director of the Utah Department of Health (UDOH). In late March 2020, while the department was under enormous pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic, Saunders was asked to serve as its chief deputy. In this role, Saunders was instrumental in helping to lead the COVID-19 response. In August 2020, he was asked to serve as interim executive director.



Saunders joined the UDOH in 2015 as a consultant in the Division of Medicaid and Health Financing. Nearly two years later, he accepted a director position over the department's Office of Organizational Development and Performance Improvement. Under his leadership, this office took the lead role in the UDOH becoming an accredited public health department. During his tenure as director of Organizational Development and Performance Improvement, the department received two Operational Excellence awards from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget.

Prior to joining the UDOH, Saunders was an entrepreneur for 25 years with extensive experience in multiple verticals, and developed significant sales networks that included Target, Walmart, Toys R Us, AAFES, and QVC. He later co-founded a multi-million dollar construction company that grew to cover a national footprint with offices in Salt Lake City, St. George, Seattle and Idaho Falls. As this company's president, he headed its executive leadership team, oversaw its accounting and legal departments, and led the company's strategic planning efforts. These experiences, coupled with Saunders' ongoing passion for leadership knowledge, communications, and organizational health, led to the creation of a consulting service that has influenced companies in both the private and public sectors.

Saunders enjoys volunteering and serving his community. His volunteer experience includes teaching groups throughout the Wasatch front as a Master Gardener, a suicide prevention trainer for youth and young adults with HOPE4UTAH, and serving within in various religious capacities including chairman of the Advisory Board of LDS Family Services; chairman of the Board of Education over Seminaries and Institutes; and chairman of Scout Relations.

He received his education in communication and organizational studies from Utah Valley University and the University of California, Davis. He is married and the father of five children, four sons-in-law, and nine grandchildren.