

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Receives 5-Year \$3.29 Million Grant
from CDC to Reduce Obesity**

LITTLE ROCK — The Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has received \$3.29 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for a five-year project to reduce obesity, increase physical activity and improve nutrition in Arkansas, especially in the Delta.

The State Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) project funding began Oct. 1 and was awarded to the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine's Community Health and Education Division. Alysia Dubriske, director of Community Health and Education at UAMS, is leading the grant.

"The whole premise of this grant is to try to reduce obesity rates. The CDC has identified target areas, including access to better nutrition, increasing breastfeeding, encouraging healthier foods and physical activity in early childcare centers, and improving activity-friendly communities," Dubriske said. "At UAMS' Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, we already have many projects in these areas, so we are looking forward to combining the progress we've already made with the CDC's support to show measurable improvement on this important health issue."

UAMS staff will be working in partnership with local leadership and stakeholders across the state, but especially in counties where life expectancy is lower than national and state averages. Many rural counties in the eastern Arkansas Delta fall into this category. Obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, low physical activity, poverty and lack of access to health care are factors.

The project aims to:

- Develop and implement food service guidelines for food pantries, early childhood education centers, developmental disability day centers and local parks.
- Support breastfeeding by partnering with family practice clinics, early childhood education centers and developmental disability day centers and by offering continuing medical education hours and early childhood center and developmental disability center professional development training.

- Partner with communities to create activity-friendly routes to connect everyday destinations by implementing local policies to include bike routes, sidewalks and trails that increase safety and access for all abilities.
- Implement nutrition standards and physical activity standards into early childhood education centers across the state by changing the Quality and Improvement Rating System in Arkansas to increase physical activity, increase nutrition and physical activity education to staff, and decrease screen time.

Assisting Dubriske with the project are Christopher Long, Ph.D., senior director of Research and Evaluation at the UAMS Northwest Regional Campus; and Leanne Whiteside-Mansell, Ed.D., director of the Research and Evaluation Division in the UAMS Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. Bettie Cook, senior research administrator at UAMS, assisted with the successful grant application.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospital; northwest Arkansas regional campus; statewide network of regional centers; and six institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and Translational Research Institute. It is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 2,727 students, 822 medical residents and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses throughout the state, Arkansas Children's Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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