



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### USDA Launches \$1 Million Effort to Prevent Opioid Abuse in Five Counties

*Winrock International to lead USDA UPSOAR program with UAMS and Ozarka College*

**LITTLE ROCK, ARK. – August 7, 2019** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing \$998,834 to launch a proactive program to prevent opioid and substance abuse in north central and northeast Arkansas, a region that has high rates of opioid abuse and overdose deaths. The two-year Delta Understanding and Preventing Substance and Opioid Abuse in Rurality (Delta UPSOAR) program, led by Winrock International in partnership with Ozarka College and the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation, will deliver preventive training, education and resources to youth and adults in Baxter, Fulton, Izard, Sharp and Stone counties.

“USDA has prioritized programs that equip rural communities to prevent opioid abuse and access treatment and recovery resources,” said David Branscum, state director, USDA. “As U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue has said, the opioid epidemic knows no boundaries. It has cut through communities of all sizes and families of all socio-economic backgrounds.”

Arkansas is the second highest-ranking state in the nation for opioid prescription rates (CDC, 2018) and the Delta region is deeply affected by opioid abuse and other forms of substance abuse. The five target counties are some of the most at-risk communities in Arkansas, as indicated by incidence of non-specific drug overdose deaths, youth substance abuse and other risk factors. Delta UPSOAR is specifically designed to serve youth and adults who have not received intensive opioid and substance abuse awareness training and education through other programs. While first responders, law enforcement and some school-age children in the region have received opioid abuse training, most of the population has not.

“The opioid crisis is a threat to health and prosperity in Arkansas and across rural America. To grow resilient rural economies, we must address this problem,” said Linsley Kinkade, senior director of U.S. programs at Winrock International. “Many rural Americans lack access to the information and resources they need to prevent and address opioid abuse in their families and communities. Winrock is proud to partner with USDA, Ozarka College and UAMS on this innovative local response.”

Delta UPSOAR will improve understanding of opioid and substance abuse, reduce stigma that prevents treatment and increase confidence in identifying and reacting to opioid and substance abuse. Through live presentations, community events, online learning modules and hands-on overdose simulation training, Delta UPSOAR will equip residents of Baxter, Fulton, Izard, Sharp and Stone counties, to:

- Recognize drug dependence among family members, friends, colleagues, neighbors or themselves
- Seek help for themselves or others through area treatment and counseling centers
- Prevent drug exposure, dependency and overdose
- React and respond to an overdose

“We are passionate to engage in important programs to help our friends, families and neighbors access the resources they need to reach their potential,” said Dr. Richard Dawe, president of Ozarka College. “Our role

as a primary partner in this vital program, will be to develop curriculum and deliver workshops tailored to the needs of our community and this will make a real and lasting difference in people's lives."

Five presentations will be delivered by Ozarka College in the region and will be live-streamed to [uamspatientslearn.org](http://uamspatientslearn.org), where they will remain available for download and viewing for free to the public. Ten interactive online educational modules will also be made available for free to the public on [uamspatientslearn.org](http://uamspatientslearn.org).

Ozarka College, in partnership with the UAMS Centers for Simulation Education, will host 40 workshops at various venues across the five target counties and 14 additional youth workshops will be hosted at 14 high schools. Program workshops will incorporate 20 hands-on, risk-free overdose simulation trainings with high-tech mannequins to train people of all ages to react and respond to an overdose.

"Rural health continues to be a priority of UAMS and our Institute for Digital Health & Innovation is dedicated to eliminating health disparities in rural communities," said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D. MBA. "UAMS is proud to be a partner in this effort to fight the opioid epidemic, along with our other programs such as MATRIARC and UAMS AR-IMPACT that assist health professionals who provide treatment for opioid use disorders."

Preventive education efforts will continue in the region beyond the two-year program through ongoing use of the curriculum, online resources and overdose simulation trainings. All resources produced by Delta UPSOAR will be directly marketed to and designed for the needs of Arkansans living in the Delta.

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#### **ABOUT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL**

[Winrock International](#) is a recognized leader in U.S. and international development with a focus on social, agricultural and environmental issues. Inspired by its namesake, Winthrop Rockefeller, Winrock combines scientific and technical expertise with entrepreneurial innovation to deliver market-based solutions that improve lives around the world. Winrock's mission is to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity and sustain natural resources across the globe.

#### **ABOUT OZARKA COLLEGE**

Since its beginning in 1975, Ozarka College has been changing lives and communities throughout the north-central Arkansas region. Ozarka College is a comprehensive technical college, offering associate degrees, technical certificates and certificates of proficiency that prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities or for entry into or advancement in the workplace. Additionally, the College offers adult basic education, continuing education and customized training for local businesses and industries.

#### **ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES**

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven 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, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. It is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. *U.S. News & World Report* named UAMS Medical Center the state's Best Hospital; ranked its ear, nose and throat program among the top 50 nationwide; and named six areas as high performing — cancer, colon cancer surgery, heart failure, hip replacement, knee replacement and lung cancer surgery. UAMS has 2,727 students, 870 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, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit [www.uams.edu](http://www.uams.edu) or [www.uamshealth.com](http://www.uamshealth.com). Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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