

UAMS News Bureau

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UAMS Head Start Program Receives \$41 Million Grant

LITTLE ROCK – The Head Start/Early Head Start Program in Pulaski County, which has been administered by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Department of Pediatrics since 1998, has received a grant of \$41 million from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The grant will be used to operate the program and is structured to provide \$8.2 million a year for five years. Head Start/Early Head Start is a federally funded program designed to increase school readiness of low-income children.

The Pulaski County Head Start/Early Head Start Program serves more than 700 students age 6 weeks to 5 years and their families through both center-based and home-based programs across the county.

“Being chosen for this grant award in an open competition is very gratifying and proof of the good work this program has been doing for 20 years,” said Eduardo Ochoa, M.D., section chief of community pediatrics and an associate professor of pediatrics in the UAMS College of Medicine.

Ochoa said he was particularly pleased to have a variety of agencies partnered with the program submit support for the UAMS Head Start grant application.

“It just shows the value of the partnerships we’ve made all over the county and how important it is to serve the families we do,” he said.

The grant will allow some changes to the program’s design and management including:

- Increasing both the number of children served in Early Head Start and in home-based services, with an emphasis on serving pregnant women and a particular focus on teen moms and a growing Latino community;
- Centralization of services and consolidation of centers from 12 facilities to 9; collaborating with University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College both as a hub location, serving up to 249 children and housing the program’s

administrative office, and using the college's resources and staff in addition to those of UAMS;

- Strengthening teacher performance by using the Shine Early Learning Teacher Success Rubric as part of the program's coaching and professional development plan; and
- Hiring two deputy directors to focus on providing quality services, full enrollment and program management.

"We are so grateful UAMS can continue serving the community with this comprehensive program, which is so needed," said Tyra Larkin, director of the UAMS Head Start program. "We want to be the best program we can by focusing on closing the achievement gap for at-risk children and delivering high-quality services to families."

Under the administration of the Department of Pediatrics in the UAMS College of Medicine, the program in Pulaski County offers more than traditional Head Start programs. Children and their parents also have access to health, nutrition, dental, disabilities, oral health and mental health services from UAMS and other providers. The program also provides service learning opportunities for students in the UAMS colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions and Public Health.

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 or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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