

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Receives USDA \$738,000 Grant to Purchase
Digital Health Equipment for Rural Sites, Including Prisons**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) recently received a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture that will go towards the purchase of equipment to provide long-distance learning opportunities to 36 sites around the state, including six prisons.

The \$737,882 grant, awarded to the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation, will be matched by \$110,700 in funds from UAMS.

Nearly half of the state’s population lives in rural areas with insufficient access to medical providers, according to the institute. These areas rely on digital health and distance-learning equipment, some of which hasn’t been updated in over a decade.

The portable carts will include a touch-screen monitor, keyboard and a mouse as well as a webcam, microphone and speakers. The equipment can be used to display information or connected to a computer to share content in meetings.

The equipment, provided through the USDA’s Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) program, will provide medical centers and penal facilities with unlimited access to health and recreational programming that was previously inaccessible.

“We are happy to provide this equipment to our partner organizations and thankful to the USDA for their support,” said Joseph Sanford, M.D., director of the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation.

Along with hospitals in Helena, Magnolia, El Dorado, Camden, Crossett, Warren and other rural areas around the state, the digital health equipment will be installed later this year in the Tucker Unit, Varner Prison, the Delta Regional Unit in Dermott, North Central Prison in Calico Rock, the McPherson Unit in Newport and the Mississippi County Work Re-Entry facility in Luxora.

The carts will allow the prisons to partner with higher-learning institutes and other groups to offer college courses and GED training in addition to recreational offerings and substance use and sexual violence recovery programs.

“This grant expands programming opportunities for those housed at the Varner, North Central, Tucker, Delta Regional and McPherson units and the Mississippi County Work Release Center,” Department of Corrections Secretary Solomon Graves said. “The tele-video carts will allow inmates to virtually participate in programs otherwise unavailable at their facilities. Additionally, the technology will extend training options for staff, who will be able to attend training sessions, presentations, and lectures regardless of geographical distance.”

“We are looking forward to continuing to work with the Department of Corrections to determine the many ways in which this equipment can be utilized to the benefit of all involved. Securing the equipment was the necessary first step in opening up the opportunities to come,” said Melissa Zielinski, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the College of Medicine’s Department of Psychiatry, who worked with the Department of Corrections to include their facilities in the 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; a 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. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,047 students, 873 medical residents and fellows, and six dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 11,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's, 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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