



News Release
Nov. 3, 2021

Media Contacts:

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260
leslie@uams.edu

Yavonda Chase, 501-686-8994
Wireless phone: 501-416-0354
Yavonda@uams.edu

**UAMS, Arkansas Children's Launch Program
To Improve Mental Health Care for Children in Arkansas
*Program Will Train Primary Care Providers to Screen, Diagnose,
Treat and Refer Children with Behavioral Health Issues***

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has been awarded more than \$2 million in federal grant money to equip and support primary care providers across the state to screen, diagnose, treat and refer children with behavioral health conditions.

With the grant money, the UAMS College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, under an agreement with Arkansas Children's, is developing a program called Children of Arkansas Mental Health in Primary Care (CHAMP).

The program's primary goal is to promote the integration of behavioral health in pediatric primary care in Arkansas by linking primary care physicians around the state with a pediatric mental health care team for initial and ongoing education, consultation and referral of patients who are under 18 and have behavioral health needs.

The pediatric mental health care team will consist of a child and adolescent psychiatrist, a pediatric psychologist and a care manager. The team will work with a curriculum specialist and a diverse, interdisciplinary educational team to develop the curriculum and conduct sessions using a network-based learning and guided practice model for medical education.

“Pediatric mental and behavioral health is a pandemic in this country. With this large, four-year grant, UAMS and Arkansas Children's can start to develop the best approaches to enable primary care providers to detect issues earlier and treat and refer more efficiently in order to make a real and lasting impact for society,” said William J. Steinbach, M.D., chair of the Department of Pediatrics and associate dean for child health in the UAMS College of Medicine and pediatrician-in-chief at Arkansas Children's.

UAMS, Arkansas Children's Launch Program To Improve Mental Health Care for Children in Arkansas

Page 2

Arkansas Children's will serve as the program manager in collaboration with the UAMS College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and the Arkansas Department of Health.

The Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded the grant funds as part of its ongoing effort to help providers improve access to pediatric mental health services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable.

"This program will allow us to set up much-needed support for primary care providers around the state who are the first point of contact for many of these children," said Chris E. Smith, M.D., professor and vice chair for primary care in the UAMS College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics and medical director of primary care services at Arkansas Children's. He will serve as principal investigator for this grant.

The initial group of providers targeted through CHAMP will be those in practices that are a part of the Arkansas Children's Care Network (ACCN), which has 30 pediatric practices and 160 general pediatricians in its network and plans to add an additional 100 family practice providers around the state.

The grant provides \$445,000 each year for four years, with an additional \$300,000 in additional expansion funds provided the first year, for a total of \$2,080,000 over four years, in addition to any non-federal matching funds.

The CHAMP project will focus in its first year on building a foundation, including assembling and hiring staff, conducting a needs survey of providers in the network, conducting patient focus groups, designing curriculum for sessions and establishing a telehealth process.

The second year will focus on analysis of the program's first year's results and expansion to additional practices; the third year, consolidation and expansion; and the fourth year, sustainability, including expansion of the program to additional community providers.

A CHAMP advisory committee will include the Arkansas Children's Care Network; the UAMS Department of Psychiatry; the Arkansas Department of Health; the Arkansas Department of Human Services; the director of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion at Arkansas Children's; the UAMS Department of Pediatrics' developmental and behavior pediatrics division; Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Arkansas; the Arkansas chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians; the Arkansas Behavioral Health Integration Network; the UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health; Arkansas Children's Community Engagement; and the Arkansas Rural Health Partnership.

ABOUT ARKANSAS CHILDREN'S

Arkansas Children's is the only healthcare system in the state solely dedicated to caring for Arkansas' more than 700,000 children. The private, non-profit organization includes two

UAMS, Arkansas Children's Launch Program To Improve Mental Health Care for Children in Arkansas

Page 3

pediatric hospitals, a pediatric research institute and USDA nutrition center, a philanthropic foundation, a nursery alliance, statewide clinics, and many education and outreach programs — all focused on fulfilling a promise to define and deliver unprecedented child health. Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH) is a 336-bed, Magnet-recognized facility in Little Rock operating the state's only Level I pediatric trauma center; the state's only burn center; the state's only Level IV neonatal intensive care unit; the state's only pediatric intensive care unit; the state's only pediatric surgery program with Level 1 verification from the American College of Surgeons (ACS); the state's only magnetoencephalography (MEG) system for neurosurgical planning and cutting-edge research; and the state's only nationally recognized pediatric transport program. Arkansas Children's Hospital is nationally ranked by U.S. News & World Report in seven pediatric specialties (2022—2023): Cancer, Cardiology & Heart Surgery, Diabetes & Endocrinology, Nephrology, Neurology & Neurosurgery, Pulmonology and Urology. Arkansas Children's Northwest (ACNW), the first and only pediatric hospital in the Northwest Arkansas region, is a level IV pediatric trauma center. ACNW operates a 24-bed inpatient unit; a surgical unit with five operating rooms; outpatient clinics offering over 20 subspecialties; diagnostic services; imaging capabilities; occupational therapy services; and Northwest Arkansas' only pediatric emergency department, equipped with 30 exam rooms. Generous philanthropic and volunteer engagement has sustained Arkansas Children's since it began as an orphanage in 1912, and today ensures the system can deliver on its promise of unprecedented child health. To learn more, visit archildrens.org.

ABOUT UAMS

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 3,240 students, 913 medical residents and fellows, and five 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](#).

Like us, we're social: 

###