

UAMS News Bureau

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UAMS Receives Over \$1 Million from USDA, AT&T to Expand Digital Health Education, Training in Arkansas Delta

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) recently received grants totaling more than \$1 million from the United States Department of Agriculture and AT&T that will widen the scope of existing digital health programs, including field trips for Delta-area students, K-12 summer internships and training sessions for first responders.

The USDA grant is \$1 million for two years and includes support for hands-on interactive digital health training for health professionals and the general public, virtual reality (VR) digital health training for first responders and paid summer internships for K-12 students, as well as teachers, faculty and nursing students. The AT&T grant is \$15,000 and funds Delta-area school field trips and a shadowing opportunity for underserved students at digital health resource centers in Lake Village, Pine Bluff and Helena-West Helena.

The Arkansas Rural Health Partnership (ARHP) and Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Pine Bluff are working with UAMS in the training effort called Arkansas Technology Training and Rural Assistance Center for Telehealth (ATTRACT). The effort will use training centers at the ARHP offices in Lake Village, the UAMS East Regional Campus in Helena-West Helena and Jefferson Regional Medical Center School of Nursing in Pine Bluff.

During the two-year period, ATTRACT intends to assist 160 local businesses, provide trainings for 800 Arkansans, create up to 18 jobs and save seven jobs through grant funding support.

Digital health education and trainings are useful to help patients and providers learn more about available technology that can make health care more accessible, especially in rural areas of the state. The principal investigator for both grants is Melony Stokes, DNP, RN, MSN, the senior director of programs for the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation.

“The Delta remains underserved in terms of health care access,” Stokes said. “My overall goal is to educate as many community members, patients, providers and students on the advantages of digital health and how it can be utilized in health care.”

Interested Delta-area schools will receive a stipend of up to \$1,078 to compensate for field trip costs, including transportation, meals and other costs to ensure trips are free for students who wish to participate. The grant also gives students access to shadow a health professional to learn more about careers in health care and technology. Paid internships for high school students, college students as well as instructors are possible under the USDA grant, Stokes said.

The trainings, which can accommodate hundreds of attendees each year, provide varying levels of information on digital health. Topics include the benefits of digital health as well as potential career opportunities as medical or technology professionals. Students also have the opportunity for hands-on demonstrations with digital health devices such as blood pressure monitors, EKGs, stethoscopes and otoscopes.

The VR trainings are specific to first responders, including firefighters, police, emergency medical technicians, wildlife officers and the National Guard. The sessions expand on trainings offered by the UAMS Centers on Aging, a program of the UAMS Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, offering law enforcement and first responders to conduct search-and-rescue operations for those living with dementia.

Spearheading that effort is AmyLeigh Overton-McCoy, Ph.D., APRN, director of the Centers on Aging and an associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine. She is the aging services director for ATTRACT.

“The Centers on Aging have been offering VR simulations about Alzheimer's and other dementias, along with other common aging issues to assist in improving the health of older Arkansans,” Overton-McCoy said. “Through our partnership with IDHI, we are expanding this to an interactive scenario for law enforcement and first responders, allowing them to practice communicating with those living with dementia, as well as patterns they tend to follow when wandering. These are all key concepts to understand and follow for successful outcomes in a crisis or emergent situation.”

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](#).

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