DHS, UAMS Program Receives $9.5 Million Grant For Statewide Mental Health Initiative

LITTLE ROCK — In an effort to increase mental health services for Arkansans, especially in rural parts of the state, the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) announced an $9.5 million, five-year mental health grant program.

DHS partnered with UAMS, two federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), and the nonprofit Arkansas Behavioral Health Integration Network (ABIHIN) for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant.

The funds will implement a mental health and behavioral health collaborative care model at 36 clinics and health centers across the state. This model links patients, primary care providers, behavioral health care managers, and psychiatric consultants. An electronic registry also is used as part of this model to track patient treatment and progress. These reforms will streamline health care, improve coordination and make it easier to connect patients with psychiatric services.

“Too many Arkansans are struggling with mental health challenges. Smart health care investments, like this initiative, can help us save money and treat Arkansans who need help,” said Paula Stone, director of the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health within DHS. “There is a need for early identification of behavioral health needs across our state. These funds will help us increase access to services for a significant population, which will in turn prevent the need for crisis and other services in the future. We are grateful for the support of our partners and look forward to fully implementing this program.”

UAMS will initially add the collaborative model at three clinics and then expand its availability at additional sites through the rest of the grant period. The FQHCs will follow a similar implementation plan.
“Mental illnesses are managed predominantly by primary care clinicians,” said Shashank Kraleti, M.D., chair of the UAMS Department of Family and Preventative Medicine. “This grant will bolster the work that UAMS has been doing in integrating behavioral health personnel into all our primary care clinics, which provide much needed access to comprehensive care to the communities in the state.”

The grant will also fund the creation of a planning council that will work to make resources available for other primary care clinics across the state and support expanding the collaborative care model to other sites.

Earlier this year, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed into law Act 615, which requires private insurers to reimburse collaborative care billing codes. The Arkansas Medicaid program has promulgated a new manual that allows reimbursements for screenings and for primary care physicians to submit claims for counselors providing services in their offices.

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.