

**UAMS News Bureau**

Office of Communications & Marketing  
4301 West Markham # 890  
Little Rock, AR 72205-7199

[uamshealth.com/news](http://uamshealth.com/news)



**News Release**  
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**Media Contacts:**

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998  
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260  
[leslie@uams.edu](mailto:leslie@uams.edu)

Yavonda Chase, 501-686-8994  
Wireless phone: 501-416-0354  
[yavonda@uams.edu](mailto:yavonda@uams.edu)

**UAMS Receives \$1 Million Department of Justice Grant  
to Help Reduce Violent Crime in Pine Bluff Schools**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences’ (UAMS) Institute for Digital Health & Innovation has received a three-year, \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to help reduce violent crime in and around Pine Bluff schools.

The project, School Telemedicine in Arkansas for Lessons in Trauma-informed Education (STARLITE), aims to improve school security at Arkansas schools. Created in 2021, the program provides students, teachers, parents and administrators with the tools they need to recognize, respond quickly to and help prevent acts of violence.

“We are pleased with the recognition from the Department of Justice and how STARLITE will help Arkansans in the Pine Bluff community,” said Stanley Ellis, Ed.D., principal investigator for the program and director of education for the institute. “Pine Bluff is a community with a very rich history, and this grant will allow us an opportunity to save our youth so that they can contribute to their community’s storied legacy.”

Pine Bluff is the latest school district to add the STARLITE program, which began with three pilot sites in Jasper, Lamar and Magazine. School officials in these districts are trained in how to respond to mental health crises and how to coordinate between law enforcement and school personnel in handling threats.

The award will be used to encourage more involvement from families, improve communication between families and schools, and create a comprehensive safety plan for the schools, Ellis said.

Harrison-based Seed Digging Wellness Center and the Hurricane Hype Center at New St. Hurricane Baptist Church in Pine Bluff will collaborate with the institute and school district as part of the program.

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Seed Digging blends evidence-based counseling techniques into a simple language to empower children with tools to overcome emotional and behavioral struggles and boost self-confidence. It is effective against suicidal thoughts and behaviors, violence, aggression, and other emotional and behavioral health issues and addictions.

The Hurricane Hype Center provides an environment that strengthens youth and nurtures relationships through recreational, educational, social, spiritual, health and wellness opportunities. It includes a summer program, youth basketball leagues, after-school programs and coding clubs.

“We understand that it takes more than one entity to execute such a worthy endeavor, and that is why it is important that we work with organizations native to this community and trusted by its residents to give us a better chance of saving our youth,” Ellis said.

The [UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation](#) oversees the UAMS e-Link Network, the UAMS HealthNow virtual care, the Stroke Program, the Sexual Assault Assessment Program and the Sickle Cell Program. The institute has five maternal and neonatal initiatives as well as five trauma programs. IDHI also offers language interpreter services and educational resources for patients and providers.

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 3,275 students, 890 medical residents and fellows, and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 12,000 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](http://www.uams.edu) or [www.uamshealth.com](http://www.uamshealth.com). Find us on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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