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**UAMS Earns \$750,000 Federal Grant to Relaunch  
Family Medicine Residency Program in El Dorado**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has earned a \$750,000 federal grant to help reestablish a family medicine residency program in El Dorado.

The grant was awarded by the Health Resources and Services Administration, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. UAMS is one of just 15 organizations nationwide to receive funding from an [\\$11 million effort](#) to launch medical residency programs in rural communities.

UAMS will use the grant for curriculum development, recruiting and training faculty and staff and other costs associated with achieving accreditation and sustainability.

“The establishment of a family medicine residency program in El Dorado will provide a framework to help address the workforce shortage that rural areas across Arkansas are facing,” said Donya Watson, M.D., associate professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. “We would like to recruit and train graduates from Arkansas medical schools who will hopefully stay in Arkansas to practice.”

The goal of the El Dorado residency program is to improve and expand access to health care in rural areas while also strengthening the physician workforce in underserved south Arkansas communities. The program will be a partnership between UAMS and South Arkansas Regional Hospital and will establish a rural track family medicine program with a focus on maternal health and obstetrics.

Watson will be the program director of the El Dorado residency program, which will serve as a full-circle moment for her.

“For me personally, as a graduate of the program here in 1997, I am very excited about the opportunity to help train the next generation of the health care workforce for El Dorado and south Arkansas,” Watson said.

The program aims to earn accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education in 2025 and enroll its first residents in the summer of 2026. The trainees will complete part of their residency in Little Rock at UAMS and Arkansas Children's Hospital, though the majority of their training will be spent immersed in El Dorado and south Arkansas-based rural clinical settings.

Relaunching the residency program is part of the process of reestablishing a regional campus in El Dorado. Another step occurred earlier this year with the opening of the [UAMS Health Family Medical Center](#) in March.

Once established, the El Dorado location will be UAMS’ ninth regional location and will help create an influx of physicians and health care professionals in Union County, said Richard Turnage, M.D., vice chancellor of UAMS Regional Campuses. That, in turn, will make it easier to maintain consistent levels of medical care for several rural counties in south Arkansas.

“Studies show that many physicians choose to practice within 100 miles of where they received their residency training, which is one reason UAMS is so committed to our Regional Campuses and our rural residency programs,” said Turnage. “These programs make a real difference in improving health care access throughout the state.”

The majority of existing family practice physicians in rural areas of Arkansas were trained at one of UAMS’ regional campuses.

Originally called Area Health Education Centers (AHECs), regional campuses were first created in 1973 through the efforts of then-Gov. Dale Bumpers, the Arkansas Legislature and UAMS to train medical residents and provide clinical care and health education services around the state. Currently, UAMS’ eight regional campuses are in Batesville, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Helena-West Helena, Jonesboro, Magnolia, Pine Bluff and Texarkana.

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 eight 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, Institute for Digital Health & Innovation and the Institute for Community 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

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