

UAMS News Bureau

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

uamshealth.com/news



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Media Contacts:

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

David Wise, 479-713-8679
Wireless phone: 501-259-1628
dwise@uams.edu

**UAMS, Northwest Arkansas Schools Kick Off
2024-25 School Year with Nutrition Trainings**

FAYETTEVILLE — As students returned to the classroom, team members from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Institute for Community Health Innovation worked with districts across Northwest Arkansas to prepare for the 2024-25 school year with a plan for healthier eating.

The institute kicked off the year by visiting nutrition staff in the Farmington, Lincoln, Rogers and Siloam Springs school districts. The trainings included topics such as USDA meal pattern requirements, reading nutrition labels to ensure students are receiving the right nutrients and how to reach picky eaters in the lunch lines.

“Our back-to-school trainings are tailored to fit the needs of each district,” said Jenn Clampitt, a registered dietitian with the institute. “This gives us the opportunity to meet with every member of the child nutrition team and help them kick off their school year by aligning our goals and addressing the needs they’ve identified.”

The trainings build on longstanding relationships between UAMS and school districts throughout the state. Through the Creating Healthy Environments for Schools (CHEFS) program, UAMS partnered with those four districts as well as the Springdale and Bentonville school districts to improve their meal participation. The program prioritizes student and parent engagement and environmental changes to make healthy options more accessible in the cafeteria.

“UAMS has been instrumental in reviewing and revising our meals and menus to adhere to restrictions on sugar, sodium and calories,” said Elizabeth Cheramie, director of child nutrition at the Siloam Springs School District. “Their expertise has ensured our meals remain both nutritious and compliant with health guidelines. They’ve also provided essential staff training, equipping our team with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver exceptional nutrition services.”

The institute works with districts to implement successful and effective nutrition changes to their food service programs to increase access to fresh, healthy produce, and to lower sugar, saturated fat and sodium in meals. Currently, the institute partners with more than 100 schools across the state, reaching more than 75,000 students annually.

“Our school nutrition programs provide innovative approaches to implementing change in the way school meal programs operate,” said Bonnie Faitak, associate director of community programs at the institute. “Traditionally, school meal changes are through a top-down approach. Instead, our institute uses a partnership and engagement approach to influence and impact change that is customized for each school district.”

To learn more about the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation and its school nutrition programs, visit communityhealth.uams.edu.

Funding for the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation’s school nutrition programs is provided by the Alice L. Walton Foundation, National Institutes for Health and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

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 Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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