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UAMS, Partners Offer Comprehensive Doula Training

Accepting Scholarship Applications Now

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Institute for Community Health Innovation will train 80 doulas over the next year through a comprehensive program administered by the institute and other partners, including Ujima Maternity Network and Birthing Beyond.

The program is available to individuals throughout Arkansas through a scholarship that covers the full cost of the training, which is spread across six months.

Doulas are trained birth coaches who provide continuous emotional support, advocate for and aid informed decision-making during labor and delivery, assist with breastfeeding initiation and support, promote positive maternal mental health, and advocate for culturally sensitive care within health care systems. The use of doulas has been strongly advocated by the institute and other partners to improve maternal mortality rates across the state.

“Through this program, we’re working with incredible maternal health leaders in Arkansas to provide new systems of whole-person care and support for mothers across Arkansas,” said Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., director of the institute. “Not only are we providing new options for moms to receive the care they need, but we’re also providing new career pathways for people who want to serve their community.”

With support from the Arkansas Blue & You Foundation and the Arkansas Community Foundation, the institute is offering \$3,295 scholarships for participants to complete the six-month, hybrid training program. The program includes 40 hours of in-person training with Ujima Maternity Network — which will be held on select dates in Conway,

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Jonesboro, Springdale, Arkadelphia and a southeast Arkansas location still to be determined — as well as a scheduled three-day virtual training with Birthing Beyond. Participants will also complete a 45-hour Certified Breastfeeding Counselor course and will train in HIPAA and CPR.

Training will also be offered to help participants navigate self-employment to help equip them to serve as doulas professionally after they complete the program.

“Through these scholarships, we’re excited to help strengthen a doula workforce in Arkansas to help mothers have safe, healthy pregnancies,” said Krista Langston, executive director of community programs at the institute. “Improving maternal health in Arkansas is a group effort. We’re lucky to work with partners like Ujima and Birthing Beyond to create better health opportunities for women across the state.”

The institute is accepting applications from Arkansans across the state. Eligible trainees must be at least 18 years of age, be proficient in English, have a valid driver’s license and have reliable internet access.

Arkansas currently has fewer than 50 trained doulas, and the state does not offer official doula certification. The UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation is partnering with the Doula Alliance of Arkansas, Ujima Maternity Network, Excel by Eight, the Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and hospitals statewide to develop a doula association and to train 200 new doulas over the next two years.

For more information about the doula training program or to apply for a doula training scholarship, visit uams.health/doula.

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 3,485 students, 915 medical residents and fellows, and seven 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](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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