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**UAMS and Partners Building CHW Workforce
Amid Passage of the Community Health Worker Act**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Institute for Community Health Innovation and its partners are continuing to build the state’s community health worker workforce following Gov. Sarah Sanders’ signing of House Bill 1258 on April 3, establishing the Community Health Worker Act.

The act formally establishes the role of a community health worker as “an individual who is a trusted member of or has an unusually close understanding of the community that he or she is serving as a liaison, link, or intermediary between health services and the community,” facilitating improved access to health and social resources. With certification officially recognized by the state through the Community Health Worker Act, certified CHWs may now receive compensation for services from the Arkansas Medicaid Program or a health benefit plan.

“Community health workers are real-life superheroes. They help connect individuals and families to essential care in their communities, leveraging cultural and community-wide approaches to help their neighbors achieve optimal health,” said Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., director of the Institute for Community Health Innovation. “The passage of the Community Health Worker act doesn’t just give CHWs some much-deserved recognition; it helps establish their role as a sustainable, lifelong career so they can continue to improve the health of their communities.”

Working with the Arkansas Community Health Worker Association (ARCHWA), the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation established its one-year CHW training program in 2022 and has since trained more than 175 CHWs from across the state. The program also offers college credit opportunities through the University of Arkansas Hope-Texarkana.

“This legislation is a significant step toward creating healthier, more resilient communities,” said Krista Langston, executive director of Community Programs at the Institute for Community Health Innovation. “By prioritizing accessible health care and

further establishing the role of the community health worker, this legislation sets the stage for lasting, positive change in health outcomes across the state of Arkansas.”

Through its partnership with ARCHWA, the institute is seeking employers of current uncertified community health workers — often referred to by such titles as care coordinator or advocate, case worker or outreach specialist — to help those employees become certified. The training is available to employed persons with three years or less of experience in a CHW-related role.

As part of the training, partnering employers co-sponsor new community health workers as field placement trainees or apprentices. Trainees are required to complete 160 hours of tailored education — including 80 hours of in-person and virtual courses and another 80 hours of continued education — and one year of on-the-job training with their registered field placement site.

To learn more about the program, email communityhealth@uams.edu or click [here](#).

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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