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New Collaboration to Develop Statewide System of Care for Arkansas Families

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), ARHealth Ventures, and numerous community organizations will help build a coordinated statewide system of care for families in Arkansas that brings together home visiting programs, early childhood programs, healthcare organizations, and community partners.

Through the five-year, $4.375 million award from the Health Resources and Services Administration, Arkansas SEED will establish a coordinated access point for families in Arkansas to connect with home visiting programs, healthcare, early childhood services, and community-based services and resources.

“We are committed to improving health and well-being for families from the very beginning,” said Nicole Bedard, director of programs at the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation. “By bringing organizations together and strengthening connections among the people and programs serving families, we can help ensure that Arkansas children and families have a healthy start and the resources they need to thrive.”

The initiative brings together ARHealth Ventures, the Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Excel by Eight, the Arkansas Home Visiting Network, the Arkansas Department of Health, the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation, and other healthcare organizations, community-based organizations, and families. Through collaboration, these groups will work to increase access to care, home visiting, and other resources that support healthy child development and family well-being.

“There are many hard-working professionals in Arkansas supporting families who are pregnant or have infants and toddlers. However, too often, families don’t know how to find help, or if they do, their services aren’t coordinated,” said Anna Strong, executive director of the Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. “Pediatricians eagerly anticipate collaborating with child care and pre-K educators, home visitors,

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community partners, and families to ensure positive outcomes and school readiness for kids."

Arkansas SEED will create a high-quality system of care to increase access to comprehensive, integrated services for families with children from birth to age 5. The program also will establish a coordinated infrastructure to strengthen communication, improve referrals, and help providers and organizations work together more effectively to meet families' needs, with a focus on sustainability.

"At Excel by Eight, we're excited about the possibilities for this project long-term," said Angela Duran, executive director of Excel by Eight. "Together, we will help bring family voices to the table and will work with partners to ensure this work goes well beyond the next five years."

Arkansas SEED builds on the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation's work to improve maternal and child health through collaboration across the state. The institute also oversees HealthySteps, an early childhood development program integrated into UAMS clinics across Arkansas and supported by community health workers, as well as programs focused on healthy pregnancies and postpartum care. Through its pregnancy support and home visiting program, Healthy Start, the institute has reached more than 2,600 moms, babies, and support persons in northwest and south Arkansas.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospitals in Little Rock and Bryant; an orthopaedic 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 the Institute for Community Health Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise, including affiliated hospitals in Pine Bluff, Helena-West Helena, Mena, and Warren. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,813 students and 1,030 medical residents and fellows, and two dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with about 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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