

Fall 2023

UAMS<sup>®</sup>

Community  
Health & Research



# Annual Report

UAMS Community Health & Research

# Table of Contents

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| A Message from Dr. Pearl McElfish .....        | pg 3     |
| Who We Are .....                               | pg 4-5   |
| The Thread to Quality Health Care .....        | pg 6-7   |
| On the Road to Health Equity.....              | pg 8-9   |
| Transforming Maternal Child Health .....       | pg 10-11 |
| Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative ..... | pg 12-13 |
| Food Insecurity Community of Practice .....    | pg 14-15 |
| Equitable Access to Healthy Food .....         | pg 16-17 |
| Diabetes Self-Management Education .....       | pg 18-19 |
| Center for Community-Engaged Evaluation.....   | pg 20-21 |
| Thank You .....                                | pg 22-23 |



## A message from **Dr. Pearl McElfish**

UAMS Community Health & Research is a diverse, multi-disciplinary team dedicated to working with communities to create a better state of health for all Arkansans. This is no small task. Arkansas ranks poorly in numerous health outcomes. We are at or near the bottom in maternal and child health, cardiometabolic diseases, food security, and access to care.

The barriers that exist between Arkansans and optimal health are the reason UAMS Community Health & Research was founded 11 years ago. We believe that Arkansas can become one of the healthiest places in the nation. We do this important work through the power of working with partners to implement large-scale change in four strategic areas:

- Maternal and Child Health
- Health, Hunger and Nutrition
- Health Equity and Access
- Diabetes and Cardiometabolic Disease

Over the last year, we have made healthcare more accessible to communities throughout Arkansas by training and establishing the title of Community Health Workers, partnering with hospitals to improve quality of care for mothers and babies, engaging in community-based research, and deploying mobile health units to some of the most rural, underserved areas of our state.

In this report, you'll see how our team, community, and partners have come together to move Arkansas toward a better state of health for all.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pearl McElfish".

Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., MBA  
Director  
UAMS Community Health & Research

# Who We Are

UAMS Community Health & Research is a diverse team dedicated to working with communities to create a better state of health for all.

We work with individuals, organizations, schools, and communities to collaboratively turn research into action and equity, with a strategic focus on the following areas:



Maternal and Child Health



Health, Hunger & Nutrition



Health Equity & Access



Diabetes & Cardiometabolic Disease



**OUR GOAL:** *a better state of health for all.*



# By the Numbers:

171 multidisciplinary team members

75 Arkansas counties reached by community health and research programs, as well as communities in Oklahoma, Iowa, Washington, Hawaii, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands

52 scholarly research articles published between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023

\$25 Million in extramural funding invested into community health initiatives, partnerships, and research in Arkansas





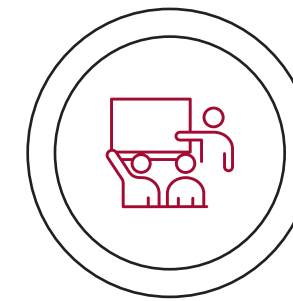
# The Thread to Quality Health Care

We believe in the power of Community Health Workers in Arkansas.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are integral to clinical, public health, and social systems. They reduce barriers to healthcare by building trust and capacity in underserved communities, positively impacting healthcare costs, patient satisfaction and community health.

We know CHWs are an essential part of transforming Arkansas, and we are supporting the development of the CHW workforce through education, professional development, and advocacy.

## Education



Our CHW program is the first of its kind in Arkansas, and is one of two programs in the state that prepares CHWs for certification through the Arkansas Community Health Worker Association (ARCHWA). Our CHW program offers training, assistance, apprenticeship opportunities, and on-the-job mentoring opportunities to new and experienced CHWs.

Since 2021, we have trained and deployed more than **230 CHWs** throughout Arkansas.

## Professional Development



We engage more than **300 CHWs** for continuing education each month, and offer upskilling opportunities to CHWs. We have also partnered with the University of Arkansas Hope Texarkana to offer college credits to CHWs in our training program, creating new opportunities for future career growth.

## Advocacy



As of July 2023, **Community Health Worker** is officially a recognized state title in Arkansas. Our team at UAMS, partners, and leaders in Arkansas have long advocated for this designation, which will allow state employees filling this important role to be recognized for their work.

**230**

CHWs trained by UAMS  
Community Health & Research

**76**

Organizations supported and provided  
training for CHW integration



# On the Road to Health Equity

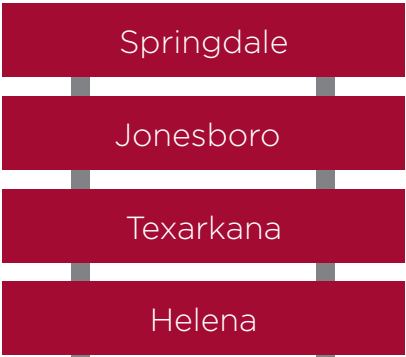
We are working to ensure every Arkansan can access healthcare through Mobile Health.

We have deployed four mobile health units that travel throughout the state, where we provide health-related services such as preventative health screenings, COVID-19 and flu vaccinations, and more. CHWs are present at every mobile health event to screen for social determinants of health and to provide clinical navigation, resource navigation, and language interpretation to community members. CHWs also provide case management to clients to ensure clients receive needed support for important community resources like housing assistance and SNAP benefits.



Our Mobile Health services allow us to reach underserved populations, such as rural and low-income communities. We're reaching these communities where they are – literally – so we can help them access essential health services.”

- Mary Victor  
Nurse Educator  
UAMS Community Health & Research



1,700+

mobile health events have been hosted across the state, reaching all 75 Arkansas counties.



# Transforming Maternal Health



Earlier this year, we launched the mobile CenteringPregnancy® program to offer group prenatal care to rural, medically underserved areas across Arkansas.

CenteringPregnancy® is prenatal care that includes a woman's regular health checkup, extra time for group learning and sharing, and more time with their healthcare provider. We are delivering CenteringPregnancy® in the maternal health deserts of Arkansas (areas with no obstetrical care) to improve the health outcomes of pregnant women, babies, and families.



UAMS Community Health & Research leads the only Healthy Start program in Arkansas. Healthy Start engages patients to promote early prenatal care, provide clinical navigation and case management, and help patients adhere to care plans. CHWs provide pregnant women and families with education, resources, and support through home, hospital, or other community services.

## What's ahead:



Support **doula integration** across Arkansas through certification and educational campaigns



Launch **Telehealth MOM** to study how to best deliver comprehensive postpartum care while ensuring timely treatment of postpartum complications

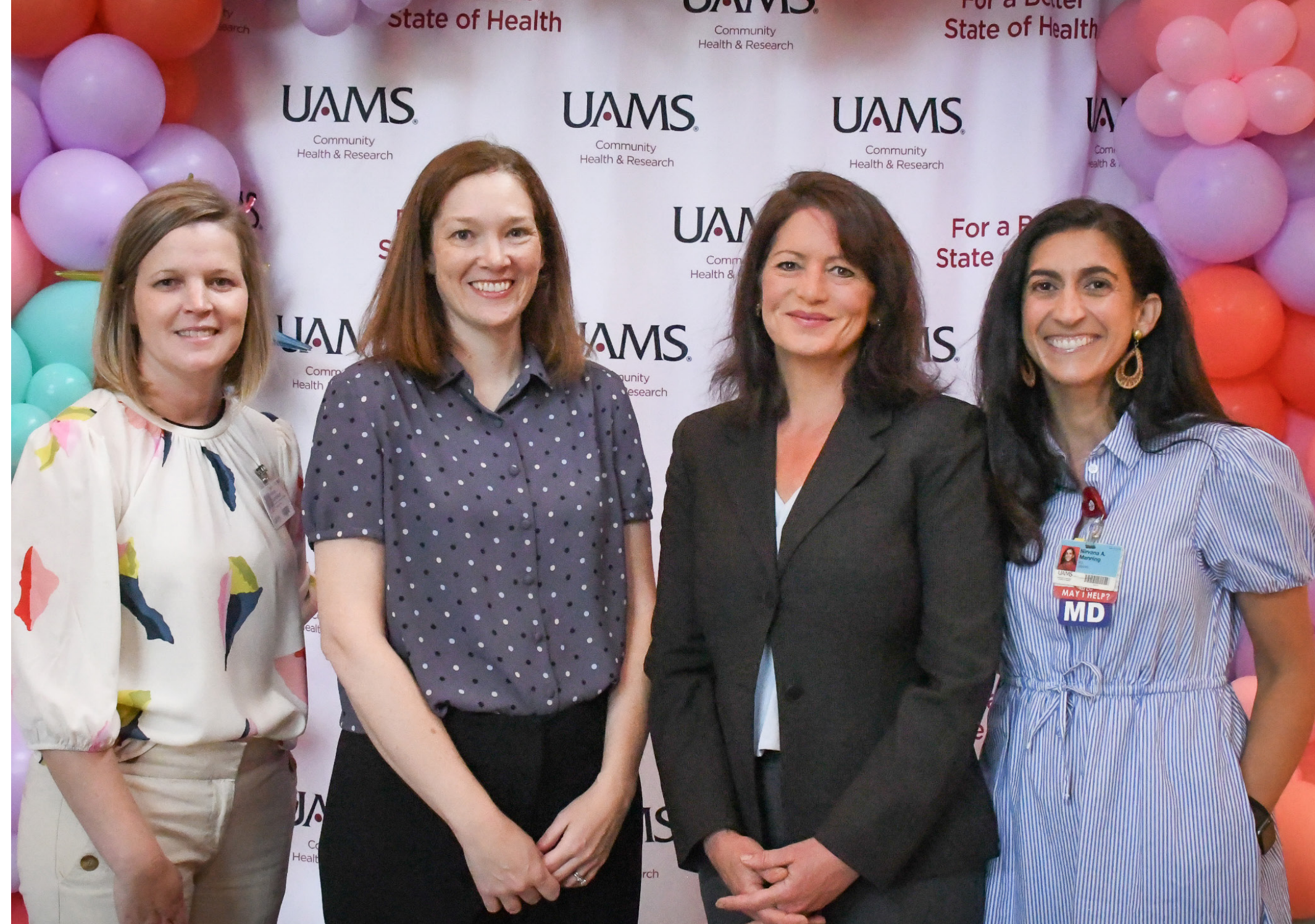


Launch the **Arkansas Maternal Health Task Force** in partnership with Arkansas Department of Health



Some of my clients didn't know how important prenatal care is for their baby, or they need resources to help take care of their family. Our work allows us to connect moms to those services that help them and their child grow healthy."

- Maryann Lometo  
Community Health Worker  
UAMS Community Health & Research



From left: Executive Director of Programs Krista Langston; Associate Professor Jennifer Callaghan-Koru, Ph.D.; Division Director Pearl McElfish, Ph.D.; and Obstetrics and Gynecology Department Chair Nirvana Manning, M.D.



# Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative



We believe that Arkansas can become a leader in maternal health. We're supporting that vision through the Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ARPQC), which has brought together **34 of the state's 37 birthing hospitals** to ensure all families in Arkansas have access to the highest quality maternity care. State perinatal quality collaboratives (PQCs) are leading the way toward improving maternal health outcomes and Arkansas is joining the national effort to address the maternal health crisis.

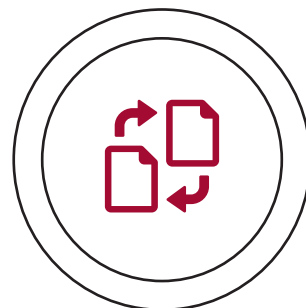
The ARPQC will equip health providers at participating hospitals with education and resources to promote high quality maternity care. We began our first joint initiative this year, which will focus on reducing cesarean deliveries for low-risk pregnancies.

## The ARPQC supports hospitals through:

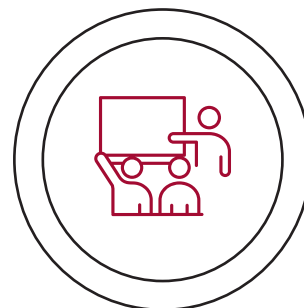
### Data



### Information Sharing



### Education

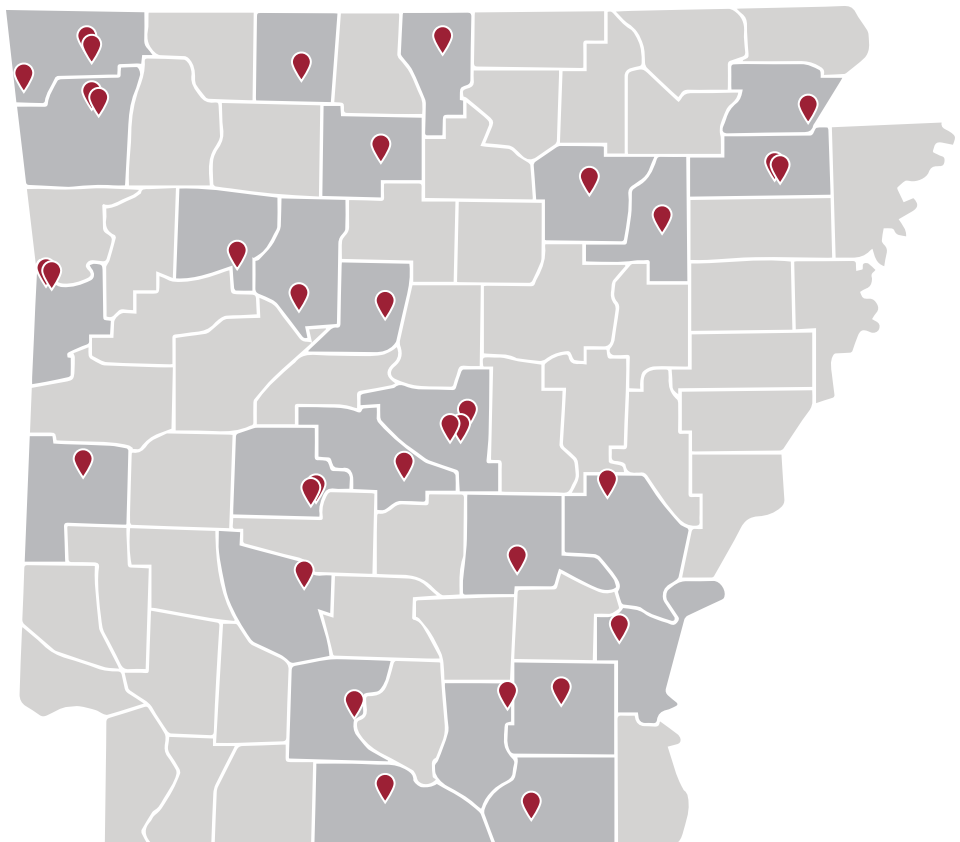


Quality improvement through Perinatal Quality Collaboratives has greatly improved maternal health outcomes and reduced disparities in other states. We're excited to partner with local birthing hospitals to improve perinatal health outcomes in Arkansas."

- Jennifer Callaghan-Koru  
Associate Professor  
UAMS Community Health & Research



# ARPQC Birthing Hospitals:



Arkansas  
Perinatal  
Quality  
Collaborative

Supporting Quality Maternity Care in Arkansas

1. Arkansas Methodist Medical Center
2. Ashley County Medical Center
3. Baptist Health Medical Center: Arkadelphia
4. Baptist Health Medical Center: Conway
5. Baptist Health Medical Center: Fort Smith
6. Baptist Health Medical Center: Little Rock
7. Baptist Health Medical Center: North Little Rock
8. Baptist Health Medical Center: Stuttgart
9. Baxter Regional Medical Center
10. Bradley County Medical Center
11. CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs
12. Delta Memorial Health System
13. Drew Memorial Health System
14. Jefferson Regional Medical Center
15. Johnson Regional Medical Center
16. Medical Center of South Arkansas
17. Mena Regional Health System
18. Mercy Hospital: Fort Smith
19. Mercy: Northwest Arkansas
20. National Park Medical Center
21. Northeast Arkansas Baptist Memorial
22. North Arkansas Regional Medical Center
23. Northwest Health: Siloam Springs Regional
24. Northwest Medical Center: Bentonville
25. Northwest Medical Center: Willow Creek Hospital
26. Ouachita County Medical Center
27. Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center
28. Saline Memorial Hospital
29. St. Bernard's Medical Center
30. Unity Health: Newport
31. Unity Health: White County Medical Center
32. University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
33. Washington Regional Medical Center
34. White River Health System



**New Community Food Lockers installed at St. James Missionary Baptist Church** allow the church's food pantry clients to receive food outside of regular business hours.

# Food Insecurity Community of Practice

With the support of the Walmart Foundation and in coordination with community partners, we launched the Food Insecurity Community of Practice in 2021 to bring organizations and individuals together to cultivate new strategies for addressing problems related to food insecurity in the region. The community of practice identified several key goals to improve equitable healthy food access and to create more effective food distribution models:



Increase SNAP/WIC access



Improve equitable and inclusive healthy food access and availability



Evolve food recovery and distribution models



Help organizations understand and adapt to their local food system

This year, the community of practice worked with **St. James Missionary Baptist Church in Fayetteville** to install Community Food Lockers at the church's pantry. The lockers are temperature-controlled, food-safe storage devices that store fresh and frozen foods. Eligible food pantry clients who cannot access the food pantry during normal hours are able to place an order online and pick it up from the food locker at a more convenient time. These food lockers are the first of their kind in the state and will help bridge the gap between food pantries and our neighbors who experience food insecurity.



The Food Insecurity Community of Practice builds the capacity of organizations to serve their community, share resources and implement community-driven solutions to food insecurity in the region."

- Marissa Spear  
Research Evaluator  
UAMS Community Health & Research





# Equitable Access to Healthy Food

We are reducing food insecurity and chronic disease in Arkansas by collaborating with schools, community organizations and individuals to ensure every Arkansan has equitable access to healthy, affordable food.

## School Lunch



Children in grades K-12 get half of their calories at school. That's why we've partnered with more than **100 schools** in Arkansas to enhance their school nutrition programs, improving the nutrition of more than **85,000 students** annually. We work with schools to customize nutrition plans, procure healthier foods, acquire new equipment and train nutrition staff so they can help students see the benefits of the healthy foods on their cafeteria tray.

## AmeriCorps VISTA



As part of the AmeriCorps VISTA's Arkansas Community Health Corps program, we have deployed **21 AmeriCorps VISTAs** to address food insecurity and improve nutrition through agriculture and community-based work across the state. Our service members play a valuable role in their communities by providing nutrition education, food distribution, and volunteer recruitment and management, as well as assisting with grant writing, fundraising, and research.

## Delivering Health



We are addressing food insecurity and improving health outcomes among Arkansans with type 2 diabetes by delivering healthy foods directly to their door. We've worked with partners across the state to deliver more than **2,000 healthy food boxes** to patients in **19 counties** in Arkansas, along with education to help recipients manage their diabetes.



Through our Health, Hunger and Nutrition programs, we offer expertise, guidance, and training to organizations and schools who share our common goal: to ensure every person in Arkansas has access to healthy, nutritious food.

-Charles Hardin  
Senior Project Manager  
UAMS Community Health & Research







# Diabetes Self-Management Education

UAMS Community Health & Research works with rural clinics, churches, community organizations and pharmacies to research diabetes and to implement Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES) programs, including a family-model DSMES program. In addition to being adopted in Arkansas, our family-model of DSMES has demonstrated such strong results that it has also been adopted in Oklahoma, Washington, Iowa, Hawaii, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Over the next 5 years, we will work with AR Health Ventures, Inc., the Arkansas Community Health Worker Association (ARCHWA), and the Arkansas Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network (AR-CPESN) to expand access to DSMES in rural and underserved populations in 61 high-need counties in Arkansas. Through this work, we will support rural pharmacies in the development and implementation of DSMES programs and will train CHWs to support diabetes patients. Through these expanded partnerships, we will reach **more than 100,000 Arkansans**.

# 6,000+

served through Diabetes Prevention & Management Programs



We are improving health outcomes not only for individuals with type 2 diabetes, but also for their families and communities. Our work builds on years of research, allowing our team to provide culturally-tailored education to medically underserved communities across the state, country, and world."

- Sarah Pollack  
Program Manager  
UAMS Community Health & Research







## Center for Community-Engaged Evaluation

UAMS Community Health & Research's Center for Community-Engaged Evaluation partners with organizations to reduce health disparities by designing and implementing high-quality evaluations of their programs and policies.

The center utilizes a culturally-responsive evaluation approach, engaging communities and clients throughout the evaluation process.

### Ongoing Evaluation Areas:

- Built Environment
- Clinical Research Workforce Development
- Community Health
- Community Health Workers
- Food Insecurity
- Food Sovereignty
- Health Literacy
- Healthy Schools
- Maternal & Child Health
- Mental Health and Substance Use
- Parenting
- Preventive Cancer Screening
- Translational Science
- Vaccine Uptake
- Youth Development



Our team takes a community- and culturally-responsive approach to evaluation, meaning we are intentional about engaging with our communities and learning their values and priorities. Understanding and respecting cultural traditions and principles is vital to ensure the evaluation is reflective of lived experiences."

- Alex Jauregui-Dusseau  
Evaluation Specialist  
UAMS Community Health & Research



## Our Approach

Community values are at the heart of our work. Through evaluation, quality assurance and continuous quality improvement, we assess and develop strategies to help communities achieve their best health.



## Next Steps

**Evaluate Client Outcomes**



**Continue Evaluating Engagement**



## Outcome:

We strengthen programs and policies to ensure health for all.

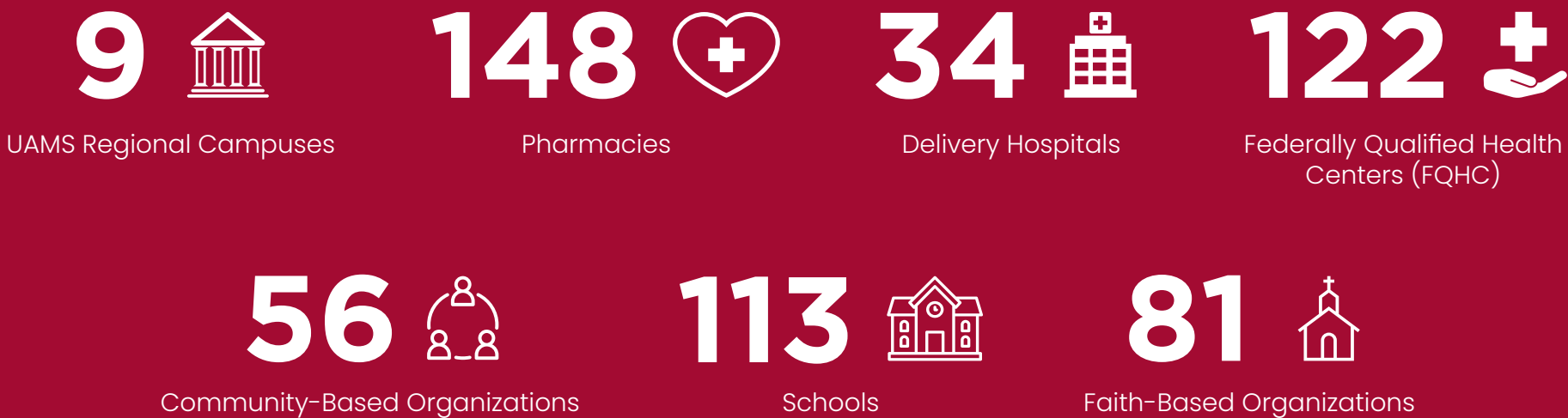


# Thank you.

UAMS Community Health & Research would not be possible without the support, dedication, and strength of the community we serve. We are honored to collaborate with community-based organizations, healthcare institutions, academic partners, and community members who share our mission of creating a better state of health for all.

To all of our partners and to the communities we serve, **thank you** for allowing us to work alongside you to understand the barriers to health, to build systems and networks to deploy community health initiatives, and for advising our work to fit the needs of each community.

## In Arkansas, our network of partners includes:







**UAMS**®

Community  
Health & Research

# together,

for a better state of health



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