

## **Partnership aims to recruit more doctors to rural Arkansas**

LITTLE ROCK – Community Health Centers of Arkansas (CHCA) announced Friday a partnership with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences with the goal of expanding access to quality healthcare in rural Arkansas.

With the benefit of a \$4.6 million grant it received in August from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, UAMS will create a program for medical students to participate in "clinical rotations" at Community Health Centers. The rotations will allow medical students to shadow physicians and gain an appreciation for primary care medicine, and especially how it benefits rural communities.

"Advocating for improving health of rural Arkansans by expanding access to quality medical services is a huge part of our mission," said LaShannon Spencer, chief executive officer of CHCA. "This partnership is truly exciting. We're confident that once medical students see the good we do at Community Health Centers and the professional fulfillment physicians receive, they will want to return and build their careers with us."

There are 12 Community Health Centers in Arkansas with some 130 branches in nearly every corner of the state. The first students are expected for rotations at Community Health Centers in the summer of 2020.

This is the first step toward preparing Community Health Centers to be even fuller partners with UAMS by offering residency programs at the centers, which could start after two or three years.

The federal grant will among other things fund a medical rotation coordinator who will be a UAMS employee housed at CHCA.

This is the second item of significant news for Community Health Centers in recent weeks. In July, CHCA announced that centers have embarked on an innovative MAT program (Medication Assisted Treatment) for opioid abuse.

Community Health Centers provide services regardless of ability to pay. Those without insurance are charged on a sliding scale based on their income. Community Health Centers are funded through patient revenue and federal grants. These much-needed grants are scheduled to expire September 30, pending action in Congress.