



**ARKANSAS TOBACCO
SETTLEMENT COMMISSION**

April-June 2023
QUARTERLY
REPORT

**Report presented to**

Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission
101 East Capitol Avenue, Suite 108
Little Rock, AR 72201

**Report presented by**

Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Evaluation Team
University of Central Arkansas
201 Donaghey Avenue, Conway, AR 72035
November 2023

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ABOUT THE ARKANSAS TOBACCO SETTLEMENT COMMISSION



ATSC Mission

The mission of the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission is to provide oversight and assessment of the performance of the seven programs funded by the Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act of 2000. The Act mandates the distribution of Master Settlement Agreement funds. The seven health programs that receive funding work to enhance the health and well-being of Arkansans through various projects, programs, and outreach.

Funded Programs



Arkansas Biosciences Institute

Robert McGehee, Jr., PhD, Director
Jimie Jarry, Program Coordinator

ABI Goal: To develop new tobacco-related medical and agricultural research initiatives to improve the access to new technologies, improve the health of Arkansans, and stabilize the economic security of Arkansas.



UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health

Mark Williams, PhD, Dean
Liz Gates, JD, MPH, Assistant Dean for Planning and Policy

COPH Goal: To improve the health and promote the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Arkansas through education, research, and service.



Arkansas Minority Health Initiative

Kenya Eddings, MPH, Director

MHI Goal: To improve healthcare systems in Arkansas and access to healthcare delivery systems, thereby resolving critical deficiencies that negatively impact the health of the citizens of the state.



Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program

Lana "Joy" Gray, Branch Chief

TPCP Goal: To reduce morbidity and death associated with tobacco use by preventing initiation of tobacco/nicotine products and providing cessation services/resources to Arkansans who want to quit using tobacco.



Tobacco Settlement Medicaid Expansion Program

Mary Franklin, Director, Department of Human Services Division of County Operations

TS-MEP Goal: To expand access to healthcare through targeted Medicaid expansions, thereby improving the health of eligible Arkansans.



UAMS Centers on Aging

AmyLeigh Overton-McCoy, PhD, GNP-BC, Director

UAMS-COA Goal: To improve the health of older Arkansans through interdisciplinary geriatric care and innovative education programs and to influence health policy affecting older adults.



UAMS East Regional Campus

Stephanie Loveless, MPH, Director

UAMS East Goal: To recruit and retain healthcare professionals and to provide community-based healthcare and education to improve the health of the people residing in the Delta region.

ARKANSAS TOBACCO SETTLEMENT COMMISSION AND STAFF

Andrea Allen, Commission Chair

Executive Director, A-State Delta Center for Economic Development
Governor Appointee

Jennifer Fowler, Commissioner

Director, Arkansas NSF EPSCoR at Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC)
AEDC Permanent Designee

Jerri Clark, Commissioner

Director of School Health Services, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE)
ADE Permanent Designee

Mary Franklin, Commissioner

Director of Divisions of County Operations, Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS)
DHS Permanent Designee

Nick Fuller, Commissioner

Deputy Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE)
ADHE Permanent Designee

Ken Knecht, MD, Commissioner

Physician, Arkansas Children's Hospital
Senate President Pro Tempore Appointee

Martha Hill, Commissioner

Counsel
Attorney General Appointee

Renee Mallory, Commissioner

Secretary of Health, Arkansas Department of Health (ADH)
ADH Permanent Designee

Zsanica Ervin, Administrative Analyst

ARKANSAS TOBACCO SETTLEMENT COMMISSION EVALUATION TEAM

Emily Lane, MFA, PhD(c)

Project Director

Betty Hubbard, EdD, MCHES

Evaluator: Arkansas Biosciences Institute

Marc Sestir, PhD

Evaluator: UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health

Denise Demers, PhD, CHES

Evaluator: Arkansas Minority Health Initiative

Janet Wilson, PhD

Evaluator: Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program

Joseph Howard, PhD

Evaluator: Tobacco Settlement Medicaid Expansion Program

Ed Powers, PhD

Evaluator: UAMS Centers on Aging

Jacquie Rainey, DrPH, MCHES

Co-PI & Administrator; Evaluator: UAMS East Regional Campus

Rhonda McClellan, EdD

Co-PI

Qualitative Report



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS™



BUILDING A CULTURE OF HEALTH

ARKANSAS BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE (ABI), UAMS FAY W. BOOZMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH (COPH), ARKANSAS MINORITY HEALTH INITIATIVE (MHI), *TOBACCO PREVENTION AND CESSATION PROGRAM (TPCP), TOBACCO SETTLEMENT MEDICAID EXPANSION PROGRAM (TS-MEP), UAMS CENTERS ON AGING (UAMS-COA), UAMS EAST REGIONAL CAMPUS (UAMS EAST)

*TPCP FUNDS UAPB PROGRAMS: GRADUATE ADDICTION STUDIES PROGRAM (GASP), MINORITY RESEARCH CENTER (MRC), MINORITY SUB-RECIPIENT GRANT OFFICE (MSRGO)

EDUCATION

49,394

EDUCATION ENCOUNTERS

11,865

YOUTH ENCOUNTERS

MHI, TPCP,
UAMS-COA, UAMS East



The MHI sponsored Camp iCAN in June, a three-day program for Arkansas youth that offers activities, workshops, and exercises to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and self-confidence development.

689

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
& STUDENTS EDUCATED

ABI, COPH, TPCP,
UAMS-COA, UAMS East



1,038

K-3 STUDENTS VIEWED
PROGRAM ON
DANGERS OF VAPING



24

DISTANCE-ACCESSIBLE
COURSES OFFERED
BY COPH



70

UAMS
Fay W. Boozman
College of Public Health

COPH GRADUATES

2



GASP GRADUATES

SERVICE



1,104

ARKANSANS ENROLLED
IN SMOKING CESSATION
VIA BE WELL ARKANSAS

34%

FY23 SMOKING
QUIT RATE VIA
BE WELL
ARKANSAS

The TPCP reported 3,751 enrollees in tobacco cessation in FY23 via the Be Well Arkansas Call Center, with a quit rate of 34.33%, **the highest quitline rate in the nation.**



9,707

ARKANSANS SERVED
BY TS-MEP

ARKANSAS
DEPARTMENT OF
**HUMAN
SERVICES**
Tobacco Settlement
Medicaid Expansion



Blue Umbrella Farmers Market in June 2023 featured produce and crafts from the state's Human Development Centers.



1,667

PATIENT
ENCOUNTERS
UAMS-COA, UAMS East



12,214

EXERCISE
ENCOUNTERS
UAMS-COA, UAMS East



3,706

HEALTH
SCREENINGS
MHI, UAMS East





BUILDING A CULTURE OF HEALTH

ARKANSAS BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE (ABI), UAMS FAY W. BOOZMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH (COPH), ARKANSAS MINORITY HEALTH INITIATIVE (MHI), *TOBACCO PREVENTION AND CESSATION PROGRAM (TPCP), TOBACCO SETTLEMENT MEDICAID EXPANSION PROGRAM (TS-MEP), UAMS CENTERS ON AGING (UAMS-COA), UAMS EAST REGIONAL CAMPUS (UAMS EAST)

*TPCP FUNDS UAPB PROGRAMS: GRADUATE ADDICTION STUDIES PROGRAM (GASP), MINORITY RESEARCH CENTER (MRC), MINORITY SUB-RECIPIENT GRANT OFFICE (MSRGO)

RESEARCH

UAMS

Fay W. Boozman
College of Public Health



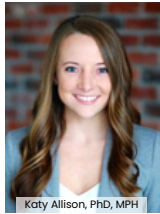
125

COPH RESEARCH PROJECTS

Ongoing research addresses topics such as cancer treatment, reducing tobacco exposure, developing telehealth resources for rural communities, and diabetes treatment.

97%

OF PROJECTS
FOCUSED ON
ARKANSAS



Katy Allison, PhD, MPH

KL2 Program
MENTORED RESEARCH CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Katy Allison, PhD, MPH, assistant professor in the **COPH** was selected for the KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Scholar Awards Program. The KL2 program is for UAMS junior faculty and is led by the UAMS Translational Research Institute. Through the KL2, Allison will receive two years of research support and training as she conducts a study that will improve access to care for pregnant women in rural Arkansas.

Arkansas
Biosciences
Institute

ABI CONTINUES RESEARCH ON DIVERSE HEALTH TOPICS

Photos from 2022 ABI Annual Report



Tameka Bailey, PhD

Vibha Srivastava, PhD

Ali Ubeyitogullari, PhD

Haopeng Li, PhD Candidate

This quarter, **ABI** continued to support groundbreaking and diverse research projects by top-notch scientists across the five member institutions.

ABI TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ARKANSAS APCD

Kenley Money, director of information systems for the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) continues to work with the **ABI** director on various applications for the All-Payer Claims Database that will include helpful user tips and online training, which includes a proficiency test for all new users.



MINORITY RESEARCH CENTER SUPPORTS TOBACCO STUDIES

Currently, the **MRC** is providing support to two funded projects with the Community Clinic in Northwest Arkansas and Philander Smith College on the topics of utilization of tobacco treatment in a healthcare setting and tobacco use during COVID-19, respectively.



ECONOMIC IMPACT



\$35 Million

IN CLAIMS PAID BY TS-MEP

\$26 Million

LEVERAGED IN FEDERAL
MATCHING FUNDS

UAMS | Donald W. Reynolds
Institute on Aging

CENTERS ON AGING



\$730,582

Leveraged by UAMS-COA,
equal to \$1.50 per ATSC \$1



\$28,568

Community Partner Donations
to UAMS-COA



\$24,382

Revenue generated from UAMS
East Family Medical Center



\$21,313

Grant from the Geriatric
Workforce Enhancement
Program to support UAMS-COA



BUILDING A CULTURE OF HEALTH

Arkansas Biosciences Institute (ABI), UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health (COPH), Arkansas Minority Health Initiative (MHI), *Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program (TPCP), Tobacco Settlement Medicaid Expansion Program (TS-MEP), UAMS Centers on Aging (UAMS-COA), UAMS East Regional Campus (UAMS East)

*TPCP funds UAPB programs: Graduate Addiction Studies Program (GASP), Minority Research Center (MRC), Minority Sub-Recipient Grant Office (MISRGO)

TESTIMONIALS

Arkansas Biosciences Institute: *"Arkansas Biosciences Institute leadership has remarkable foresight to include agricultural research in ABI's research strategy. . . . Fundamental questions can be explored in animal models that connect the dots to solving common health problems among Arkansans. . . . The ABI grants we administer have proven to be an invaluable resource to our faculty for experimental proof-of-concept, acquisition of preliminary data, and research design. All are necessary to be competitive for larger, competitive extramural grants."* – Nathan McKinney, PhD, ABI Institutional Director

UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health: *"The college addresses the needs of Arkansas. That was the kind of work I wanted to connect with and the kind of work I knew was needed in many areas of Arkansas. . . . It's a dynamic college. It's ideal if you want a quality public health education directly relevant to the needs of our communities. The college has a very supportive environment."* – Paul Duguid, MPH, assistant director of funding programs for UAMS TRI, COPH alum

Arkansas Minority Health Initiative: *"Our students and staff would like to thank the Arkansas Minority Health Commission for partnering with us at Heart2Heart Connections Summer Camp, making it extra special this year. This fantastic partnership allowed us many activities and experiences we had not had available in previous years. Your support not only gave us a first-class week of engaging and learning for the students, but it has also allowed us to impact the surrounding communities in a positive way!"* – Carolyn Harris, founder and executive director of Heart2Heart Connections

Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program: *"This was a great conference. Thank you to all who put in the hard work to make this available. Thank you to all of the presenters for taking time to share valuable information."* – Attendee at COPD Conference supported by the Arkansas Tobacco Education Initiative

UAMS Centers on Aging: *"[This program] has made me aware that I need to combine using my brain at the same time that I use my body. . . . If you combine those two, your brain really gets a workout! Your balance improves as well as your memory and reaction time. I have attended these sessions since they were started."* – Participant at Schmieding Center classes

UAMS East Regional Campus: *"Good Food Rx gives me great food every month. I also enjoy the nutrition education lessons. I am learning to eat better, exercise, and manage my diabetes better for myself and for my family. LaShanda is a great instructor that has helped me prepare my mind for my daily struggles. I have a stressful job that causes me to be an emotional eater from time to time. I really thank her for her hard work and for keeping me on task from month to month."* – Participant in Good Food Rx study

PROGRAM PROGRESS AND EVALUATION



ABI PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Program Description

The Arkansas Biosciences Institute, the agricultural and biomedical research program of the Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act, is a partnership of scientists from Arkansas Children's Research Institute, Arkansas State University, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. The ABI supports long-term agricultural and biomedical research at its five member institutions and focuses on fostering collaborative research that connects investigators from various disciplines across these five institutions. The ABI uses this operational approach to address the goals as outlined in the Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act. These goals are to conduct:

- Agricultural research with medical implications;
- Bioengineering research that expands genetic knowledge and creates new potential applications in the agricultural-medical fields;
- Tobacco-related research that identifies and applies behavioral, diagnostic, and therapeutic knowledge to address the high level of tobacco-related illnesses in Arkansas;
- Nutritional and other research that is aimed at preventing and treating cancer, congenital and hereditary conditions, or other related conditions; and
- Other areas of developing research that are related or complementary to primary ABI-supported programs.

Program Goal

The goal of the ABI is to develop new tobacco-related medical and agricultural research initiatives to improve the access to new technologies, improve the health of Arkansans, and stabilize the economic security of Arkansas.

ABI EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities

Dr. McGehee, ABI director, and the stakeholders continue to have discussions regarding the All-Payer Claims Database (ACPD) to solve the research investigators' access issues. Kenley Money, director of information systems for the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) continues to work with Dr. McGehee on various applications that will include helpful user tips and online training for all users. The training will be online with a required proficiency test for all new users and existing users who repeatedly misuse the database resulting in access issues for others.

Challenges

There is an ongoing issue with the ACPD being utilized by so many research investigators who are not properly trained. This issue is causing access problems with the database. Many users do not understand how to access the data properly which is limiting access by others. Currently, there is little assistance to help with this problem.

Evaluator Comments

Since its inception, the scientific investigators of ABI have exhibited an ongoing record of research that culminates in publications, presentations, and media contacts. These outreach activities allow ABI researchers from the five programs to disseminate their findings to the public and professionals. As research projects have progressed, some findings have led to unique intellectual property and commercial applications that were eligible for patent protection. All of these metrics provide evidence of the program's past successes.

In 2020 and 2021, the rapid response to the research challenges presented by COVID-19 illustrated the commitment ABI researchers were willing and able to make to preserve the health of Arkansans. The diverse nature of the projects generated during the pandemic provided insights into the ability and capacity of investigators to channel their expertise into mitigation, treatment, and prevention of morbidity and mortality caused by the virus.

During the past two quarters, ABI was able to resume specific focus on the indicators that demonstrate the success of the program even though the COVID-19 virus continues to affect the population in Arkansas. The data on current and ongoing projects for FY 2023 are being collected and will be tabulated, analyzed, and reported at the end of the fiscal year.

ABI INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Long-Term Objective

The institute's research results should translate into commercial, alternate technological, and other applications wherever appropriate in order that the research results may be applied to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of any health-related programs in the state. The institute should also obtain federal and philanthropic grant funding.

- **Indicator:** The five member institutions will continue to rely on funding from extramural sources with the goal of increasing leveraged funding from a baseline of \$3.15 for every \$1.00 in ABI funding.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. During FY22, investigators received \$6.74 in extramural funding for every \$1 provided by the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement. These combined funds are used to support pilot projects, purchase new equipment, gain access to core laboratories, hire critical research technicians, and develop collaborative relationships. Such efforts help build strong preliminary data and provide infrastructure support to ensure the success of extramural grant applications. Extramural funding related to this indicator will be reported at the end of the fiscal year.
- **Indicator:** ABI-funded research will lead to the development of intellectual property, as measured by the number of patents filed and received.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. Patent filings and patent awards are key indicators of entrepreneurship, innovation, and potential commercial opportunities at ABI. In FY 2022, there were 10 patent filings and seven patent awards to ABI-supported research investigators. Data collection for this indicator is in progress with annual data reported at the conclusion of the fiscal year.
- **Indicator:** The ABI will promote its activities through various media outlets to broaden the scope of impact of its research.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. For FY22, ABI made 56 media contacts that occurred in a variety of formats: 15 newspaper articles, 32 press releases, two news conferences, and seven television/radio broadcasts. These contacts highlight the activities of ABI investigators and also increase the scope and impact of research conducted by this program. Data for this indicator will be reported at the end of FY23.

ABI INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Short-Term Objective

The Arkansas Biosciences Institute shall initiate new research programs for the purpose of conducting, as specified in § 19-12-115, agricultural research with medical implications, bioengineering research, tobacco-related research, nutritional research focusing on cancer prevention or treatment, and other research approved by the board.

- **Indicator:** The ABI will allocate funding to its five member institutions to support research, while also monitoring that funded research activities are conducted on time, within scope, and with no overruns.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. Data collection is in progress. During FY 2022, research investigators reported 233 new and ongoing research projects covering all five research areas. Funding was also allocated to initiate research start-ups and to maintain ongoing projects by purchasing equipment, updating infrastructure, and providing animal care. Data for this indicator will be reported at the end of the fiscal year.

- **Indicator:** The ABI and its member institutions will systematically disseminate research results and ensure that at least 290 publications and 370 presentations are delivered each year. These include presentations and publications of results, curricula, and interventions developed using the grant funding, symposia held by investigators, and the creation of new research tools and methodologies that will advance science in the future.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. Data reflecting the progress toward achievement of this indicator is in progress. This indicator was not met for FY22 due to COVID-19. Although ABI reported 426 publications, well above the goal of 290, research investigators fell slightly short of the expected number of presentations with 344. Publications by ABI investigators included 287 independent research articles and 134 articles in collaboration with other researchers. ABI reported five new or improved methodologies and research tools developed to advance future scientific endeavors. Data regarding the dissemination of research results and the creation of research tools and methodologies will be reported at the conclusion of the fiscal year.

ABI INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** Employment supported by the ABI and extramural funding will be maintained at a baseline of 300 full-time equivalent (FTE) with at least 65% of the FTE supported by extramural funds.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. Data reflecting the progress toward achievement of this indicator is in progress. This indicator was not met for FY22 due to the influence of COVID-19. During FY 2022, research investigators indicated 280 FTE jobs were supported by ABI and extramural funding. This number falls slightly below the expectation of 300 FTEs. However, of these 280 jobs, 73% were supported by extramural funding, which exceeded the goal of 65%. Final data for this indicator will be reported at the conclusion of FY 2023.

- **Indicator:** The ABI will facilitate and maintain research collaboration at a level of 20% – 25% among member institutions.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. Collection of data related to this indicator is in progress. It should be noted that during the previous fiscal year, there were 233 new and ongoing research projects reported by ABI investigators. Of these projects, 81% were collaborations between scientists at ABI supported institutions. Research activities included a wide range of health-related topics such as metabolic processes, crop performance, childhood obesity, sleep, and cancer prevention. Data related to research collaboration among member institutions will be reported at the end of FY 2023.

ABI TESTIMONIAL

Highlighting ABI Grants for Agriculture Research with Human Health Implications

Agricultural research is inextricably linked to human health. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's research aims are to develop new knowledge and technologies that ensure a safe, sustainable, and nutritious food supply from farm to fork. Beyond these crucial discoveries, numerous areas of agricultural sciences have direct implications for human health and medical research. Many of these projects provide models that inform new strategies to increase the understanding of how to improve the quality of life and health for all Arkansans.

"Arkansas Biosciences Institute leadership has remarkable foresight to include agricultural research in ABI's research strategy. A lot of our work has applications and implications in human medicine," said Nathan McKinney, PhD, associate vice president for Agriculture, assistant director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, UA System Division of Agriculture, ABI Institutional Director. "Fundamental questions can be explored in animal models that connect the dots to solving common health problems among Arkansans. ABI-funded research projects have been a great catalyst for growing the related research in Arkansas. The ABI grants we administer have proven to be an invaluable resource to our faculty for experimental proof-of-concept, acquisition of preliminary data, and research design. All are necessary to be competitive for larger, competitive extramural grants."

COPH PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Program Description

The Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health (COPH) educates a public health workforce and advances the health of the public by investigating the causes, treatments, and prevention of human health problems. Preventing chronic disease and promoting positive health behavior is the most effective way to improve the health of all people. The College's mission of improving the health of all Arkansans is realized through teaching and research as well as service to elected officials, agencies, organizations, and communities. Examples of the complex health issues addressed include improving the multiple dimensions of access to healthcare; reducing the preventable causes of chronic disease; controlling infectious diseases; reducing environmental hazards, violence, substance abuse, and injury; and promoting preparedness for health issues resulting from terrorist acts, natural disasters, and newly emerging infectious diseases.

Program Goal

The goal of the COPH is to improve the health and promote the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Arkansas through education, research, and service.

COPH EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities

Over the course of the last quarter the UAMS College of Public Health has sought various opportunities to improve the value it provides for Arkansans via education, service, and research. In addition to the information provided elsewhere in the report, a major award for a junior faculty member for her work aiding pregnancy among rural Arkansans is summarized below by journalist Kev' Moye (2023a).

Katy Allison, PhD, MPH, a research assistant professor in the College of Public Health Department of Health Behavior and Health Education, said she was grateful for being one of six people selected for the KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Scholar Awards Program. The KL2 program is for UAMS junior faculty and is led by the UAMS Translational Research Institute. Through the KL2, Allison will receive two years of research support and training as she conducts her study, "Optimized Implementation Strategies to Support Pregnancy-Related Remote Patient Monitoring."

The project will examine the potential of technology in helping to solve access to care issues for pregnant women — especially in Arkansas's rural areas. "I love the people of Arkansas," Allison said. "It's a personal and professional interest of mine to help Arkansas be a safe, quality place for women and their families to live."

"Recently, I've become involved with research in the UAMS Institute of Digital Health & Innovation," she said. "That research investigates the use of technology to reach people in areas where they may have difficulty accessing health care. I'm interested in using technology to find out how we can reach underserved women in Arkansas."

Currently there's not enough data available to explain what provider or clinic level barriers exist to using digital health technology to remotely monitor the health status of pregnant women. Allison will seek to identify those barriers and strategies to overcome them.

"I want to make remote patient monitoring more accessible for pregnant women in rural areas of our state," she said. "Arkansas has some of the worst maternal morbidity rates in the country. I want to address access to care for rural Arkansas communities like the one where my family is from."

COPH EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities Continued

Allison also mentioned that the KL2 career development resources are important to the study. That includes mentorship from a team of UAMS faculty members, including Geoffery Curran, PhD, Jennifer Callaghan-Koru, PhD, and Hari Eswaran, PhD.

“Dr. Allison is ideally suited for success as a KL2 scholar,” Curran said. “She’s a hard-working and productive junior faculty member with excellent research training from her PhD, and postdoc. Since her postdoc, she has developed additional expertise in digital health interventions. I was her primary mentor during her NIH-funded postdoctoral fellowship. I look forward to the opportunity to again mentor Dr. Allison on her important work and career development.”

Additionally, Allison will have arranged networking opportunities, funding to attend research symposiums, up to 75% salary support, \$25,000 a year for research, tuition, travel, and education. She can also take maternal health courses and trainings on efficient ways to implement digital health technologies to improve maternal health outcomes.

Overall, Allison deems the KL2 program as an exciting opportunity to focus on a study that will help her learn more about maternal health and how to improve implementation of remote patient monitoring in obstetric care. “I’m eager to find ways to implement this technology that, right now, isn’t reaching enough of our rural population,” she said. “But when it does, I know that it can make an impact to improve maternal health care. That’s why this KL2 is a wonderful opportunity. There’s always more to learn. I’m grateful for this opportunity.”

Challenges

The COPH continues to face challenges in its pursuit of its ongoing goals. One particular challenge, replacing the institutional knowledge and maintaining the legacy of outreach of a prominent retired faculty member, is summarized below.

One of the college’s first faculty members, Dr. Kate Stewart, MD, MPH, retired in June 2023 and thus the college faces the challenge of managing its community-engaged public health expertise among the multiple staff and faculty Dr. Stewart worked with and mentored in the college. Several of the graduate students she mentored are now faculty or staff in the college and the college has focused on hiring faculty with expertise in different aspects of community partnerships, community-based public health, as well as racial and ethnic health disparities in rural areas.

COPH EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Challenges Continued

Previously the community-engaged public health expertise was focused with Dr. Stewart as the lead, now there are a myriad of individuals with the appropriate expertise to maintain and expand the college's focus on community-based public health to collectively lead the college's community based-public health research and service.

Dr. Stewart was a member of the college's original planning committee and a strong advocate of the college's focus on community-based public health. She directed the Office of Community-Based Public Health and led programmatic and research initiatives requiring strong cross-sector partnerships at the regional, state, and community levels, with an emphasis on increasing healthcare access in rural communities and reducing health disparities. She has a strong knowledge base and broad skillset for engaging communities to create data and human resource infrastructure for community engaged research and evaluating the population health impact of community programs as well as the critical role of socio-cultural determinants of health.

As a professor in health policy and management she integrated her expertise in community-based participatory research and health disparities to leverage policy changes related to access to care, community health workers, and long-term care. As a professor in the department of health, policy, and management she taught classes on racial and ethnic health disparities and mentored countless numbers of graduate students and junior faculty in community engagement.

Evaluator Comments

The COPH is on track to meet all of its annual goals. Faculty and students continue to secure research grants and implement research projects, nearly always in Arkansas and relevant to Arkansas public health. COPH members are prominent in service roles focusing on health, in both professional and lay settings, and the COPH makes health-related courses and talks widely available to the public via Internet access. Graduates reflect the demographics of Arkansas and most who go on to public health positions remain in Arkansas to do so.

COPH INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Long-Term Objective

Elevate the overall ranking of the health status of Arkansans.

- **Indicator:** Through consultations, partnerships and dissemination of knowledge, the COPH serves as an educational resource for Arkansans (e.g., general public, public health practitioners and researchers, and policymakers) with the potential to affect public health practice and policy – and population health.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. Fifty-two relevant activities were reported by faculty, covering a wide range of educational contributions. Thirty-seven had statewide audiences, nine a national scope, and six focused on central Arkansas. These activities included presentations to professional, nonprofessional, and public audiences; service as consultants and contributors to health-related committees, task forces, and expert panels; and partnerships with public health practitioners and health-related community groups.

- **Indicator:** COPH faculty productivity is maintained at a level of two publications in peer-reviewed journals per one full-time equivalent (FTE) employee for primary research faculty.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. Data for this indicator are reported in the October-December quarter and will be presented in the 2022-23 biennial report.

- **Indicator:** Research conducted by COPH faculty and students contributes to public health practice, public health research, and the health and well-being of Arkansans.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. In the April-June quarter, COPH faculty engaged in 125 grants and research projects, 121 (97%) based in and/or focused on Arkansas. These projects address a wide variety of health-related topics, including cancer treatment, reducing tobacco exposure, developing telehealth resources for rural communities, and diabetes treatment. Student projects are reported in the January-March quarter.

COPH INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** COPH faculty, staff, and students are engaged in research that is based in Arkansas.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. Currently, a large majority (121 of 125, or 97%) of COPH faculty research projects are based in Arkansas. Research by students will be reported in the January-March quarter.

- **Indicator:** The COPH makes courses and presentations available statewide.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. During the April-June quarter, 24 distance-accessible courses were made available statewide. Additionally, nine research presentations were made available statewide.

- **Indicator:** Twenty percent of enrolled students at the COPH come from rural areas of Arkansas.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. During the April-June quarter, 25% (74 of 291) students enrolled in the COPH were from rural areas of Arkansas.

- **Indicator:** COPH graduates' race/ethnicity demographics for Whites, African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are reflective of Arkansas race/ethnicity demographics.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. Seventy degrees and certifications were awarded in this quarter. Seven were awarded to African-American students, 37 to white (non-Hispanic) students, nine to Asian students, three to Hispanic students, and seven to multiracial students. The remaining seven students did not report their race.

- **Indicator:** The majority of COPH alumni stay in Arkansas and work in public health.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** Of the 31 graduates who intended to begin working in public health, 26 (84%) stayed in Arkansas to do so. An additional four graduates intended to pursue a further degree in Arkansas. Also, 32 graduates reported they would seek out a residency or fellowship (no specific state indicated). Finally, three graduates' post-graduate plans were unknown.

COPH INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Short-Term Objective

Obtain federal and philanthropic grant funding.

- **Indicator:** The COPH shall maintain a 1.5:1 ratio of total annual fiscal year extramural award funding to annual fiscal year tobacco settlement dollars.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track. This information is provided annually in the October - December quarter.

COPH TESTIMONIAL

Desire to Serve Led Paul Duguid to UAMS College of Public Health, Translational Research Institute

In addition to the COPH's ongoing direct efforts at community outreach, UAMS alumni frequently cite their experience at the college as a key factor in choosing careers aiding Arkansas communities with major health concerns. A testimonial from one such alumni, who shares the role UAMS COPH played in his desire to serve local populations, is summarized below in an article by Kev' Moye (2023b).

Paul Duguid, MPH, an assistant director of funding programs for the UAMS Translational Research Institute, also is an alum of the COPH. Duguid, who started his public health education in 2007, credits the well-rounded nature of the college for helping to set the stage for his career with the institute. "The mission of the Translational Research Institute is to develop new knowledge and approaches that will address the complex health challenges of Arkansas," he said. "We focus on rural health and underrepresented populations. Both the mission of TRI and the College of Public Health directly translate into the kind of work, and the successes, I have in TRI."

Both Duguid's public health education and lived experiences influence his work. Duguid lived in Topeka, Kansas, until his family moved to Smackover in south Arkansas. A town of fewer than 5,000 people, it did not take long for Duguid to notice a unique dynamic in Smackover — a realization that forever shaped his view of the world. "Smackover is an oil boom town," he said. "The town has an oil refinery in it. Growing up, I did a lot of riding bikes around in the woods past the oil fields. I saw the environmental and health impacts of the industry, and the wealth it created. There was a huge gap between those who owned the land with oil in it and those who worked on oil drilling rigs and in refineries. In Smackover, lower income residents and the people who were financially well-off, lived in close proximity to one another, and it was all very rural.

"My household, we were a lower middle-class family. My dad was in the restaurant business, and mom worked in a medical facility as an admissions clerk. My mom was always in the community helping people who needed assistance — delivering food or clothing, driving people to doctors' appointments, whatever they needed. Seeing what mom did for people and how life was for some families around Smackover is what led to my interest in serving others and eventually public health."

The desire to serve prompted Duguid to first attend SouthArk Community College's paramedic program and earn his associate's degree. Duguid would be a paramedic in rural areas of Arkansas before and after moving to Little Rock to attend the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, eventually earning a bachelor's in technical and expository writing.

COPH TESTIMONIAL

After completing his undergraduate education, Duguid interned with the UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, where he worked in cancer education. Following the internship, he received a job in the Cancer Institute.

As Duguid learned more about public health and why the college existed, he knew he had to enroll. "The theme of public health aligns with what I believe in regarding community health," he said. "The college addresses the needs of Arkansas. That was the kind of work I wanted to connect with and the kind of work I knew was needed in many areas of Arkansas."

He enrolled in the college's Master of Public Health program with an emphasis in environmental and occupational health. The informative courses like public health law, along with the well-versed, compassionate instructors provided Duguid with a memorable experience.

"The college faculty were enthusiastic about public health and how the concepts helped our communities," he said. "At that time, the school was still somewhat new, and Arkansas was in need of public health professionals. Everyone could sense the momentum as the teachers and students knew we were at the start of improving health and health care delivery in Arkansas."

Duguid, who graduated in May 2010, appreciates how the college upholds its mission of service and making Arkansas healthier through research and innovative health care throughout the state.

"The college is focused on improving the overall health of Arkansas," he said. "It's a dynamic college. It's ideal if you want a quality public health education directly relevant to the needs of our communities. The college has a very supportive environment. From the faculty, to the staff, to the other students — it's a very positive experience. I enjoyed every moment in that environment."



MHI PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Program Description

The Arkansas Minority Health Initiative (MHI) was established in 2001 through Initiated Act I to administer the Targeted State Needs for screening, monitoring, and treating hypertension, strokes, and other disorders disproportionately critical to minority groups in Arkansas by 1) increasing awareness, 2) providing screening or access to screening, 3) developing intervention strategies (including educational programs) and developing/maintaining a database. To achieve this goal, the MHI's focus is on addressing existing disparities in minority communities, educating these communities on diseases that disproportionately impact them, encouraging healthier lifestyles, promoting awareness of services and accessibility within our current healthcare system, and collaborating with community partners.

Program Goal

The goal of the MHI is to improve healthcare systems in Arkansas and access to healthcare delivery systems, thereby resolving critical deficiencies that negatively impact the health of the citizens of the state.



MHI EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities

During the fiscal year, the MHI continued to embrace new opportunities and new partnerships. The agency was able to focus on educational information and social media campaigns related to important health topics such as tobacco use, healthy eating, physical activity, and health screenings. Additionally, the Mobile Health Unit (MHU) continues to increase the number of counties and participants it serves and the MHI has boosted its strong effort to reach Arkansans through multimedia channels (radio, TV, social media, and print). The agency reported that hundreds of thousands of Arkansans were reached via these multimedia outlets.

Challenges

Heart disease continues to be a paramount challenge in the state as the number one cause of death for minority Arkansans, and the MHI continues to fight the battle against heart disease. While the MHU provides a great service to minority Arkansans and is able to provide screenings for many people, challenges related to repairs continue to occur. Also, the MHI experienced challenges with staffing. Turnover has caused many staff members to take on the responsibilities of multiple people. At the end of the fiscal year, four positions were not filled: social media specialist, nurse, grants manager, and fiscal support analyst. With the hiring freeze implemented in January 2023, it was difficult for the MHI to continue its work and outreach in the community.

Evaluator Comments

The MHI continues to thrive despite the difficulties with turnover and a hiring freeze. They continue fruitful outreach efforts and have maintained their screening numbers as well as numbers in all media categories throughout this entire fiscal year. The MHI continues to add valuable information to its website. Their media presence has offered hundreds of thousands of Arkansans opportunities to gain crucial information regarding overall health, including nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use, breastfeeding, and mental health, among other topics. The Let's Chat radio segments and live Facebook events where individuals throughout the state can ask questions and receive answers from the comfort of their own home were just two of the opportunities the MHI offered this fiscal year to improve the health of those they serve. All in all, the MHI remains steadfast in providing vital services and information that will help minority Arkansans reduce death/disability due to tobacco, chronic, and other lifestyle-related illnesses.

MHI INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Long-Term Objective

Reduce death/disability due to tobacco, chronic, and other lifestyle-related illnesses of Arkansans.

■ **Indicator:** The MHI will raise awareness and provide access to screenings for disorders disproportionately critical to minorities as well as to any citizen within the state regardless of racial/ethnic group, as measured by the number of health screenings, educational encounters, counties reached, as well as efforts related to multimedia outreach.

- **Progress: Met**

- **Activity:** This indicator has been met for FY23. The MHI continues to schedule outreach initiatives and sponsor multiple health fairs, educational events, and screening initiatives throughout the state, which has resulted in sustained progress toward raising awareness and providing access to screening. In addition to face-to-face events, MHI reaches hundreds of thousands of Arkansans via multimedia efforts. Below are the FY23 efforts related to this indicator.

- During FY23, the MHI shared educational information via outreach events with 5,658 Arkansans (150% increase from FY21) from 56 counties. Health screenings totalled 10,831 (about half as many as in FY22). Further, the MHI was able to utilize its MHU to provide screenings across the state.
- The MHU has become a strong force for the MHI. Each quarter, the MHU provided anywhere from 50% to 80% of the total number of screenings. This year the MHU provided nearly 80% again. This program has been a huge success and continues to bring screenings and educational opportunities to minority populations throughout the state, reaching 45 counties (an increase of 14 counties) this year.
- Information given through MHI's multimedia outreach remains a constant force for raising awareness of healthy habits. The MHI continued its radio and television ads focusing on a variety of health topics including tobacco, COVID-19, cholesterol, nutrition, and exercise. The MHI also continued to use print media (*El Latino*), webpages (Fox16.com, KATV.com, and the AMHC website), and social media (Twitter and Facebook) to disseminate information. On its social media platforms alone, more than 520,000 impressions (1.5 times the number last year) were reported during this fiscal year.

MHI INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Short-Term Objective

Prioritize the list of health problems and planned interventions for minority populations and increase the number of Arkansans screened and treated for tobacco, chronic, and lifestyle related illnesses.

■ **Indicator:** The MHI will maintain the number of health screenings and educational encounters related to stroke awareness for minority Arkansans within a 10% variation of the previous fiscal year.

- **Progress: Met**

- **Activity:** This indicator was met for the fiscal year. With continued robust education of minority Arkansans regarding high blood pressure and cholesterol, the two leading causes of stroke, MHI has increased in every marker related to this indicator. The MHI provided 1,935 blood pressure screenings and 1,633 cholesterol screenings this year; this is an increase of 300% and 400%, respectively, from the previous fiscal year. The agency also ran more than 6,000 paid TV and radio commercials focused on healthy eating and exercise, the importance of health screenings related to stroke, and tobacco prevention and cessation to avoid stroke risks. Minority Arkansans were also educated about stroke risk through community events. MHI reached thousands of people across the state through outreach events and reported approximately 520,000 social media impressions on Facebook and Twitter.

■ **Indicator:** The MHI will maintain the number of health screenings and educational encounters related to hypertension awareness for minority Arkansans within a 10% variation of the previous fiscal year.

- **Progress: Met**

- **Activity:** This indicator was met and far exceeded the indicator criteria. Hypertension (high blood pressure) is the leading cause of stroke. During FY23, the MHI provided 1,935 blood pressure screenings. Additionally, more than 6,000 paid television commercials encouraging healthy behaviors related to hypertension were aired on six television stations in central and northwest Arkansas. The MHI reached several thousand Arkansans over the course of the year through their sponsored events and social media campaigns, recording nearly 520,000 impressions on Facebook and Twitter.

MHI INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** The MHI will maintain the number of health screenings and educational encounters related to heart disease awareness for minority Arkansans within a 10% variation of the previous fiscal year.
 - **Progress: Met**
 - **Activity:** This indicator was met for the fiscal year. This year's screening numbers looked more like FY20 and FY21 numbers, though the cholesterol screenings during FY23 increased 121% and 183% from FY20 and FY21, respectively. Additionally, all other community and media efforts continue to increase. MHI's efforts related to heart disease awareness are documented below.
 - High cholesterol levels lead to heart disease. During this year, the MHI provided 1,633 cholesterol screenings. The Mobile Health Unit was also serviceable to the communities.
 - Additionally, thousands of paid television commercials encouraging healthy behaviors were aired on six television stations in central and northwest Arkansas.

- **Indicator:** The MHI will maintain the number of health screenings and educational encounters related to diabetes awareness for minority Arkansans within a 10% variation of the previous fiscal year.
 - **Progress: Unmet**
 - **Activity:** This indicator was unmet for the fiscal year. Glucose screenings increased almost 200% from FY21. However, from the previous fiscal year (FY22), this indicator was a couple hundred short of the goal for FY23 (about 10% short). Additionally, the MHI continued to ramp up the other opportunities to educate minority Arkansans regarding their health. MHI's efforts related to this indicator are documented below.
 - During this fiscal year, 2,008 blood glucose screenings were offered by the MHI, and the agency educated several thousand Arkansans on important health topics. Also, hundreds of thousands of paid television commercials encouraging healthy behaviors were aired on six television stations in central and northwest Arkansas.

- **Indicator:** The MHI will conduct ongoing needs assessments to determine the most critical minority health needs to target, including implementation of a comprehensive survey of racial and ethnic minority disparities in health and healthcare every five years.
 - **Progress: On Track to Meet Long-Term Goal**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the long-term goal. The survey is completed every five years. In FY19, the UALR Survey Research Center conducted the most recent update of the Arkansas Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Study. A hardcopy of the final report is available upon request. The next survey will be in FY24.

MHI INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** In the meantime, MHI consistently monitors health issues that are critical to minority Arkansans. These health issues are translated into educational materials and multimedia ads (including social media campaigns). This fiscal year, the MHI focused on topics of breast cancer, breastfeeding, tobacco use, family caregivers, HIV, sickle cell disease, diabetes, prostate cancer, and more. During this fiscal year, these topics have garnered nearly 520,000 social media impressions.

■ **Indicator:** The MHI will develop and implement at least one pilot project every five years to identify effective strategies to reduce health disparities among Arkansans.

- **Progress: Met**
- **Activity:** This indicator has been met for FY23. Camp iCAN was implemented during the summer months of 2023 as a three-day program with activities, workshops, and exercises that promote healthy eating, physical activity, and self-confidence development. Forty-five youth participated in the camp.

MHI TESTIMONIAL

Summer Camp Partnership to Empower Local Youth

Camp iCAN is a three-day program for Arkansas youth that offers activities, workshops, and exercises to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and self-confidence development. This year, Heart2Heart Connections participated in Camp iCAN, offering programming to 45 children who took part in Heart2Heart Connections' Summer Camp. Below is a testimonial from Carolyn Harris, founder and executive director of Heart2Heart Connections.

"Our students and staff would like to thank the Arkansas Minority Health Commission for partnering with us at Heart2Heart Connections Summer Camp, making it extra special this year. This fantastic partnership allowed us many activities and experiences we had not had available in previous years. Your support not only gave us a first-class week of engaging and learning for the students, but it has also allowed us to impact the surrounding communities in a positive way!"

Harris also provided a summary of Camp iCAN activities.

- "Rhonda Gilbert-Hines, Arkansas Minority Health, taught us kitchen fundamentals emphasizing healthy food alternatives and how to prepare them at home. She also provided goodies bags, which included infusion bottles, aprons, yoga mats, and many other goodies."
- "Harleigh Livingston, Arkansas Cooperative Extension, taught yoga techniques and made this day one to remember. We learned stress relief exercises and healthy coping skills. The Glow Germ hygiene activities taught us the importance of proper hand-washing practices."
- "Meg Gholson, Recycle Bikes for Kids, provided bikes and helmets to our students this year! After teaching about bike maintenance and safe riding fundamentals, the students went on to help a few of their fellow students ride a bike for the very first time! It was an exciting time that day, and the days that have followed have added a sense of freedom and adventure for the kids and neighbors throughout the community."
- "Detrich Smith, Arkansas Department of Health, We Can Catch class. In this class, we learned the importance of daily physical activity. Moving the body 60 minutes daily is the minimum requirement for a strong and healthy growing body."

Harris added, "At our Camp iCAN graduation celebration, Heart2Heart staff presented the students with a certificate of completion to commemorate the growth and development achieved at camp. Students returned home with new skills to carry throughout life and a new bike to maintain the healthy skills learned throughout this exciting week! Campers will remember the moments created through this partnership. We are grateful for each person who offered their time and skills to continue enriching our youth—Heart2Heart Summer Camp in cooperation with CAMP iCAN GROW.GLOW.GO has created a lasting impact on our community and memories that will last a lifetime."

TPCP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Program Description

The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program (TPCP) includes community and school education prevention programs, enforcement of youth tobacco control laws, tobacco cessation programs, health communications, and awareness campaigns. The TPCP also sponsors statewide tobacco control programs that involve youth to increase local coalition activities, tobacco-related disease prevention programs, minority initiatives and monitoring, and evaluation. The TPCP follows the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Best Practices for Tobacco Control 2014 as a guide for program development. Outcomes achieved by Arkansas's TPCP include reducing disease, disability, and death related to tobacco use by preventing initial use of tobacco by young people, promoting quitting, eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke, and educating Arkansans about the deleterious health effects of tobacco use.

Program Goal

The goal of TPCP is to reduce morbidity and death associated with tobacco use by preventing initiation of tobacco/nicotine products and providing cessation services/resources to Arkansans who want to quit using tobacco.

TPCP EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities

TPCP and its sub-grantees report a wide assortment of activities during the current quarter. A number of them are discussed below:

- Project Prevent accepted applications until April 7th for the *Drawing for a Difference* and *My Reason to Write* competitions on the topic of living tobacco and nicotine free. The *Drawing for a Difference* competition for students in grades K-3 received 275 entries, while the *My Reason to Write* competition for students in grades 4-6 received 244 entries.
- Arkansas Cancer Coalition (ACC) offered two virtual symposia: the Arkansas Nursing Association Tobacco Cessation Symposium on April 4th to 26 attendees and the UAMS Family Medicine Update Tobacco and Disease Symposium on April 28th to 223 attendees. On May 5-7, the ACC was present at Toad Suck Daze in Conway meeting with 40 people. Finally, on May 17-18 the ACC provided the Chronic Disease Forum to 54 attendees.
- Hometown Health Improvement (HHI) made presentations on vaping to grades 5-12 to 4,186 youth. Additionally, Coral's Reef was shown to 1,038 youth in grades K-3.
- Arkansas Tobacco Education Initiative (ARTEI) held 16 different community events this quarter, two ACT 811 presentations, a Prevention Taskforce Conference, and COPD Conference that had 100 attendees. Four presentations were offered to 55 attendees. ARTEI participated in the first Lung Cancer Roundtable offered by the Arkansas Cancer Coalition allowing the organization to discuss with individuals from CARTI, the American Cancer Society, and UAMS Thoracic Surgery Oncology how to better meet their target audience. Finally, ARTEI attended a variety of community events including a booth at the Russellville Chamber of Commerce Job Fair and the Pine Bluff Schools Health Fair.
- The TPCP began organizing the next virtual Tobacco Treatment Specialist (TTS) Training to be held October 23-27.
- American Lung Association hosted the "COPD and Long COVID: What Patients and Caregivers Should Know" webinar on June 29 with 26 attendees. Additionally, it made 63 contacts with students at the Pine Bluff Schools Health Fair.

Challenges

A couple of challenges in regards to the scheduling of activities were reported by the ARTEI. First, scheduling vaping presentations near the end of the school year is a challenge since schools already have a full set of events planned. Thus, their goal is to work with schools earlier in the next academic year to be added to the calendar of events. Second, challenges are faced when trying to schedule presentations for the Low Dose Cancer Screenings due to target audiences being unaware of the availability. ARTEI staff have found that one effective way to inform the public is through participation in booth events on the topic where the service can be publicized.

TPCP EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Evaluator Comments

The major take-away from this report is the dramatic increase in community contact activities and programming by TPCP and its sub-grantees that occurred during FY23 when compared to the numbers associated with FY22. One example of this can be seen with TPCP's short-term indicator stating that 500 presentations will be conducted to the public and decision makers on a variety of topics regarding tobacco and nicotine dangers. During FY22, this indicator fell far short of the goal with a total of 141 presentations. Clearly, COVID-19 restrictions had a negative impact on their ability to reach the public through the use of these presentations. However, this quarter alone, TPCP and its sub-grantees reported 214 presentations (which is more than all of last year) bringing the total number of presentations for FY23 to 715. This far surpasses the indicator goal of 500 presentations. While the influence of COVID-19 can still be felt in many areas, TPCP and its sub-grantees have been able to determine how best to reach Arkansans again to educate them on this topic.

TPCP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Long-Term Objective

Survey data will demonstrate a reduction in numbers of Arkansans who smoke and/or use tobacco.

- **Indicator:** By June 2025, the TPCP will work to decrease the current smoking/smokeless tobacco/Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) use rate among youth (grades 9–12) from 13.7% to 11.7% for smoking, from 12.7% to 11.7% for smokeless tobacco, and from 13.9% to 12.9% for ENDS.
 - **Progress: In Progress Towards Long-Term Goal, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track towards the long-term goal. It is expected that ongoing COVID-19 restrictions impact the ability of TPCP and its partners to have direct contact with youth in grades 9–12. Indicator data reported by TPCP are as follows:
 - The Arkansas youth smoking rate increased this past year from 9.7% (FY22) to 12.5% (FY23). However, the current rate of 12.5% remains lower than the baseline rate of 13.7%.
 - The Arkansas youth smokeless rate for FY23 remains the same as that for FY22: 7.3%. This is lower than the baseline rate of 12.7%.
 - The Arkansas youth Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS)/e-cigarette rate decreased significantly this past year from 24.3% (FY22) to 11.4% (FY23). This is lower than the baseline rate of 13.9%.

- **Indicator:** By June 2025, (1) the TPCP will work to decrease smoking use among adults (18+) from 22.3% to 20.3%, (2) decrease ENDS use among adults (18+) from 5.7% to 3.7%, and (3) decrease the pregnancy smoking rate from 13.9% to 11.9%.
 - **Progress: In Progress Towards Long-Term Goal, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** The indicator is on track towards the long-term goal. Updates for this indicator come from the 2021 Tobacco Data Deck report published by the Arkansas Department of Health.
 - The recent adult smoking rate in Arkansas is 20.5%. The baseline from the 2017 BRFSS was 22.3%. These data reflect a downward trend.
 - The recent adult e-cigarette use rate in Arkansas is 6.8%. The baseline was 5.7%. This reflects an upward trend.
 - The recent smoking rate of pregnant women in Arkansas is 13.7%. The 2017 PRAMS baseline was 13.9%. This reflects a slight downward trend.

TPCP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

■ **Indicator:** By June 2025, the number of comprehensive smoke-free/tobacco-free policies will increase from 219 to 400.

- **Progress: In Progress Towards Long-Term Goal, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** This indicator was established in January 2020. The goal is to increase the number of smoke-free/tobacco-free policies from a baseline of 219 to 400. With the onset of the pandemic, progress towards this goal was severely limited. During FY20 through FY22, 21 policies were established in Arkansas communities. This past year (FY23), additional policies were established within two churches. It is expected that there will be limited progress towards this goal in the coming two years since annual work plans for TPCP and subgrantees are addressing other activities such as those identified in the short-term indicators below.

Short-Term Objective

Communities shall establish local tobacco prevention initiatives.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, 500 presentations will be conducted to educate the public and decision makers on the economic burden of tobacco use, current and emerging tobacco/nicotine products, implementing smoke-free/tobacco-free policies, and dangers of exposure to secondhand smoke.

- **Progress: Met, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. During this quarter, approximately 15,291 youth and adults participated in 214 presentations covering the topics of the economic burden of tobacco use, current and emerging tobacco/nicotine products, the dangers of exposure to secondhand smoke and strategies for decreasing exposure, Coral's Reef, and vaping. Statewide sub-grantees conducted 14 presentations with approximately 1,045 attendees (additional information is available in the Opportunities section). For FY23, a total of 715 presentations were made to approximately 36,402 attendees.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, maintain the sales-to-minor violations at 6.5% or below (Baseline in FY19 = 6.3%).

- **Progress: Unmet, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was not met for FY23, although the sales-to-minor violations rate continues to trend downward. In FY21, the non-compliance rate was 12.65%; however, it dropped to 9.76% by the end of FY22. This quarter, 1,192 compliance checks were completed by the Arkansas Tobacco Control (ATC) and there were 136 sales-to-minor violations for a noncompliance rate of 11.41%.

TPCP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** However, by the end of the fiscal year, 6,447 unannounced compliance checks were completed with 610 sales-to-minor violations for a total noncompliance rate of 9.46% (which is lower than the FY22 total of 9.76%). During FY23, ATC offered 37 educational sessions for approximately 643 attendees and 375 retailers and store owners.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, Project Prevent will establish seven new school chapters within the Red Counties (Red Counties are those counties with low life expectancy).

- **Progress: Unmet, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was not met for FY23. During the current quarter, no new chapters were established in the Red Counties. For FY23, one new school chapter was established during the second quarter in Cleveland County (Red) at Rison High School. During this quarter, Project Prevent facilitated statewide meetings for student attendees.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, ADH Health Communication will maintain a comprehensive, multiplatform media plan to prevent youth initiation, eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke, and promote cessation. (Report Annually)

- **Progress: Met**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. The Office of Health Communications has developed a comprehensive yearly media plan to address youth initiation, reduction of exposure, and promotion of cessation regarding tobacco and nicotine use. This statewide media effort is scheduled to begin in August and will continue until May 2024. The plan encompasses diverse media channels including digital platforms, social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram, as well as selected print media. By strategically utilizing these channels, they aim to effectively reach and engage with the target audience, raising awareness about the risks of tobacco use among youth, minimizing exposure, and providing resources for cessation.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, Be Well Arkansas will consistently maintain a tobacco cessation quit rate higher than the previous baseline level of 28% for those enrolled in the program. (Report Quarterly: # of callers requesting service; # of callers enrolled in tobacco cessation counseling {Reset Annually})

- **Progress: Met**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. During the quarter, Be Well Arkansas (BWA) received 1,937 calls inquiring about tobacco cessation, hypertension, and/or diabetes. A total of 1,104 individuals enrolled in the tobacco cessation program. For FY23, a total of 6,750 calls were received by BWA with a total of 3,751 eligible callers enrolling in tobacco cessation counseling.

TPCP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** The quit rate for FY23 was 34.33%. In addition, during the fourth quarter the BWA call center mailed out 156 diabetes and 372 hypertension pamphlets as requested by callers. For FY23, a total of 1,862 diabetes and hypertension pamphlets were sent out to Arkansans who requested the information.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, provide quarterly updates on the implementation of the Be Well Baby program.

- **Progress: Met**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. For the current quarter, 35 women enrolled in the Be Well Baby program. Be Well Baby provides enrolled participants with 34 prenatal and eight postpartum sessions. A total of 100 counseling sessions (which included both prenatal and postpartum sessions for previous enrollees) were conducted between April and June. FY23 has seen an increase in enrollment with a total of 107 women receiving 367 counseling sessions, as compared to FY22 with 77 participants receiving 286 counseling sessions.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, the MISRGO will work with five new faith-based churches/organizations to implement No Menthol Sunday (NMS) activities.

- **Progress: Met, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. No Menthol Sunday activities were held on May 17th, including a press conference and the invitation for participants to wear green in recognition of the national observance of the dangers of menthol-flavored tobacco and smoking-related health concerns in communities of color. This year, MISRGO partnered with the Coalition for Tobacco Free Arkansas and Holy Temple Cares. As a result, five churches were involved in implementing No Menthol Sunday activities.

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, the MISRGO will execute an annual event that supports the mission of the program and report on funded and non-funded attendees.

- **Progress: Met, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. The 20th Clearing the Air Conference was held virtually during the third quarter (March 8th) in partnership with the Arkansas Cancer Coalitions's Cancer Summit (March 7th). These meetings were held virtually, in part, as an effort to increase access for a wider range of participants, as well as in response to positive feedback about previous virtual offerings. This year, 99% of respondents reported they were very satisfied/satisfied with the speakers/presenters, while 90.5% rated the event as excellent/above average.

TPCP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** By June 2023, the MISRGO will provide and report on technical assistance through direct stakeholders and property owners regarding reducing tobacco related disparities in Arkansas.
 - **Progress: Met, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. During this fiscal year, MISRGO worked with such stakeholders as the Arkansas Lupus Foundation, the National High School Basketball Association, and the Pulaski County Special School District. This quarter, the MISRGO collaborated with the Minority Research Center (MRC) to bring the “Hate the Vape” tour to the Fordyce, West Memphis, and Blytheville School Districts. As noted below, this virtual and in-person event featured Daniel Ament who received a double-lung transplant due to damage from vaping. Pre- and post-assessments were distributed and are currently being tabulated.

- **Indicator:** By June 2023, the MRC will distribute requests for proposals (RFP) to fund research studies focused on: 1) Tobacco cessation among African-American women tobacco users, 2) Tobacco use among minority groups in a time of COVID-19, and 3) Tobacco and opioid use among minority youth and young adults.
 - **Progress: Met**
 - **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. Two requests for proposals (RFP) for FY22-FY23 were funded during the third quarter of FY22. Since that time, the MRC has facilitated the continuation of the previously awarded sub-recipients: Community Clinic and Philander Smith College on the topics of utilization of tobacco treatment in a healthcare setting and tobacco use during COVID-19, respectively.

- **Indicator:** By June 2023, the MRC will conduct three virtual and/or face-to-face meetings in minority communities to discuss tobacco usage among minority groups.
 - **Progress: Met, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. One service of the MRC is to provide resources to schools and youth regarding vaping and the use of electronic cigarettes. This quarter, the MRC collaborated with the Minority Initiative Sub-Recipient Grant Office (MISRGO) to provide the “Hate the Vape” tour in the Fordyce, West Memphis, and Blytheville School Districts. This virtual and in-person event featured Daniel Ament who received a double-lung transplant due to damage from vaping. Pre- and post-assessments were distributed and are currently being tabulated.

TPCP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, the MRC will submit three open editorials to small town newspapers focusing on tobacco-related issues in rural communities in Arkansas.

- **Progress: Met**

- **Activity:** The goal for this indicator was met for FY23. The following subjects were used for op-eds this quarter: "Pregnancy and tobacco use," "Tobacco products and opioids," "Vaping and menthol-flavoring," and "Third-hand smoke." These op-eds were pitched to the following publications: *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* (a family of newspapers including *The Pine Bluff Commercial*, *Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, and *Washington County Enterprise-Leader*), *The Evening Times*, *Chicot County Spectator/The Eudora Enterprise*, *The Jonesboro Sun*, *The Log Cabin Democrat*, and *The Sentinel-Record*.

- *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 5/27/2023:
<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2023/may/27/thirdhand-smoke-a-growing-concern/>
- *Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 5/27/2023:
<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2023/may/27/thirdhand-smoke-a-growing-concern/?opinion>
- *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 5/15/2023:
<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2023/may/15/vaping-dangers-clear/>
- *Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 5/15/2023:
<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2023/may/15/vaping-dangers-clear/?opinion>
- *The Sentinel-Record*, 4/30/2023: <https://www.hotsr.com/news/2023/apr/30/tobacco-opioid-addiction-closely-linked/>
- *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 4/13/2023:
<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2023/apr/13/pregnancy-the-time-to-give-up-smoking/?news-columnists>
- *Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 4/13/2023:
<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2023/apr/13/pregnancy-the-time-to-give-up-smoking/>

■ **Indicator:** By June 2023, GASP faculty and staff will report the number of new students recruited into their program, the number of students who have graduated from the program, and the number of students who have been provided a stipend.

- **Progress: Met, Influenced by COVID-19**

- **Activity:** This indicator was met for FY23. During the current quarter, there were 20 students enrolled in the GASP. The GASP did not award any stipends between April-June 2023. Stipends are awarded to students at the beginning of fall and spring semesters annually. Two students graduated on May 6th, bringing the current number of graduates from the GASP to 134.

TPCP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** By June 2023, GASP faculty will identify programs interested in initiating tobacco prevention curriculum for juvenile justice programs in Jefferson County, Arkansas.
 - **Progress: Met, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** This indicator was met. Between April 3 – May 15, the nine-month faculty project leader and students working on this goal concluded their work for the academic year by summarizing that stakeholder interest exists for initiating a tobacco prevention curriculum for the juvenile justice program in Jefferson County. After completing a literature review, it was determined that no appropriate or relevant evidence-based curriculum matching the needs of the Jefferson County Juvenile Detention Center is available. The next step is to identify stakeholder interest in creating such a curriculum in collaboration with faculty and students.

- **Indicator:** By June 2023, GASP faculty will explore the possibility of a learning partnership between Be Well Arkansas Quit Tobacco Program and the GASP students.
 - **Progress: Met**
 - **Activity:** The goal was met in FY22 when two meetings were held to discuss GASP student observation of the Be Well Arkansas Quit Tobacco Program workings. GASP faculty met in the first quarter of FY23 to set programmatic goals for the 2022–2023 academic year. In response to requests from the UAPB community, GASP faculty prioritized the development of three virtual presentations to share with UAPB. Two presentations will focus on tobacco and nicotine health hazards and cessation resources; the other will focus on health hazards and addiction symptoms of marijuana use. Since the original FY22 goal was met, and the programmatic focus of GASP shifted, we will request an update of this indicator at an upcoming ATSC meeting. During the quarter, it was determined that a GASP faculty member will assume leadership of this project in FY24 and will work with two to three GASP students receiving stipends to advance the indicator. Work on the new indicator will begin in September 2023.

- **Indicator:** By June 2023, GASP faculty and staff will develop an alumni survey addressing employment and credentials earned since graduation as well as GASP strengths, weaknesses, and areas for potential growth in substance use workforce development. Quarterly reports will highlight progress on the creation, administration, and evaluation of this survey.
 - **Progress: Met**
 - **Activity:** This goal was met in FY22 when GASP developed and administered an alumni survey (see previous reports for more information). Returned surveys indicate the GASP program is closely aligned with current jobs in the field and helped the former students become competitive in their career. Since the original FY22 goal has been met, a request was submitted on February 7th to the ATSC to delete this indicator. The Commission voted to support the deletion of this indicator at their April 12th quarterly meeting.

TPCP TESTIMONIAL

Praise for Arkansas Tobacco Education Initiative

The Arkansas Tobacco Education Initiative (ARTEI) supported the virtual COPD Conference on April 18. This conference is a partnership between the American Lung Association and the Arkansas Department of Health focusing on such topics as the management of COPD. ARTEI testimonials taken from the COPD Conference survey comments are below:

- "This was a great conference. Thank you to all who put in the hard work to make this available. Thank you to all of the presenters for taking time to share valuable information."
- "Always very informative and I appreciate the time taken to provide these updates."
- "All the speakers and topics today were great!! Thank you!!"

Additionally, the ARTEI staff provided feedback on some of the activities they conducted during this quarter:

- "Through attending the UALR MidSOUTH Prevention Conference we made several new contacts who continue to reach out to me regarding new events and opportunities."
- "One of the [Northwest Arkansas] baseball games was during education days. They had a lot of daycares and afterschool programs in attendance. Coral's Reef posters were handed out so that we can set up a time to go show the video and hand out the coloring books. All the teachers really liked the posters and are interested in the video."
- "We have found that the best way to conduct outreach is to go out and attend community events and conferences! This quarter has been a lot busier for me because of this. We realized that we thrive in situations where we can connect with individuals and organizations in person."

TS-MEP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Program Description

The Tobacco Settlement Medicaid Expansion Program (TS-MEP) is a separate and distinct component of the Arkansas Medicaid Program that improves the health of Arkansans by expanding healthcare coverage and benefits to targeted populations. The program works to expand Medicaid coverage and benefits in four populations:

- Population one expands Medicaid coverage and benefits to pregnant women with incomes ranging from 138–200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL);
- Population two expands inpatient and outpatient hospital reimbursements and benefits to adults aged 19–64;
- Population three expands non-institutional coverage and benefits to seniors age 65 and over;
- Population four expands medical assistance, home and community-based services, and employment supports for eligible adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Tobacco Settlement funds are also used to pay the state share required to leverage federal Medicaid matching funds.

Program Goal

The goal of the TS-MEP is to expand access to healthcare through targeted Medicaid expansions, thereby improving the health of eligible Arkansans.

TS-MEP EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities

With the TS-MEP program, the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) provides support for the four TS-MEP populations as well as the state's overall Medicaid efforts. The DHS has had the legislative authority for over fifteen years to use any savings in the TS-MEP programs to provide funding for traditional Medicaid. These savings are not used to provide any funding for the ARHOME program. As the state of Arkansas continues to explore opportunities for Medicaid reform, new possibilities for using TS-MEP funds may emerge.

Challenges

As a result of the implementation of the ARHOME program, traditional Medicaid expenditures have decreased. Many Medicaid-eligible adults aged 19-64 are covered by the ARHOME program and receive their coverage through Qualified Health Plans in the individual insurance market. Arkansas Medicaid pays the monthly insurance premiums for the majority of these individuals. For the TS-MEP populations, Pregnant Women Expansion and Hospital Benefit Coverage were expected to significantly decline as individuals are provided health coverage outside of the TS-MEP. As of now, successful performance has been measured by growth in the number of participants in the TS-MEP initiatives. Arkansas DHS may need to continue to explore new performance measurements for the TS-MEP initiatives as individuals are transitioning into new coverage groups.

Evaluator Comments

The TS-MEP has been impacted by the significant changes in the healthcare system. The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced all populations served through TS-MEP. With many elective medical procedures being placed on temporary hold at the beginning of the pandemic, there was a decrease in claims as individuals delayed seeking treatment. This may explain the increase in the number of seniors served by the ARSeniors program as more procedures become available. There was also an increase in the other three TS-MEP populations. The lifting of the extending of health coverage during the public health emergency can possibly explain the increases that have been seen in the Pregnant Women Expansion population and Hospital Benefit Coverage during this quarter.

TS-MEP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Long-Term Objective

Demonstrate improved health and reduce long-term health costs of Medicaid eligible persons participating in the expanded programs.

■ **Indicator:** The TS-MEP will demonstrate improved health and reduced long-term health costs of Medicaid eligible persons participating in the expanded programs.

- **Progress: On Track, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. With the implementation of the ARHOME (Arkansas Health and Opportunity for Me) program, more individuals will have health coverage beyond the TS-MEP initiatives. Therefore, the TS-MEP long-term impact will be limited compared to the influences outside of TS-MEP. This quarter, the TS-MEP provided expanded access to health benefits and services for 9,707 eligible pregnant women, seniors, qualified adults, and persons with developmental disabilities. This is an increase of 653 persons served over the previous quarter. Total claims paid for the TS-MEP populations this reporting period were slightly above \$35 million. Additionally, TS-MEP funds are also used to pay the state share required to leverage approximately 70% federal Medicaid matching funds. This amounted to more than \$26 million in federal matching Medicaid funds during this quarter, which has a significant impact on health costs and health outcomes for the state of Arkansas.

Short-Term Objective

The Arkansas Department of Human Services will demonstrate an increase in the number of new Medicaid eligible persons participating in the expanded programs.

■ **Indicator:** The TS-MEP will increase the number of pregnant women with incomes ranging from 138–214% of the FPL enrolled in the Pregnant Women Expansion.

- **Progress: On Track, Influenced by COVID-19**
- **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. During this quarter, there were 981 participants in the TS-MEP initiative Pregnant Women Expansion (PWE) program. This is a significant increase of 271 women being served from the previous quarter. This increase may be due to the lifting of the extended health coverage for pregnant women in other categories during the public health emergency. The TS-MEP continues to provide vital services to thousands of pregnant women each year. This program provides prenatal health services for pregnant women with incomes ranging from 138–214% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Before the TS-MEP funding, the income limit for pregnant women was at or below 100% FPL. In this quarter, the TS-MEP funds for the Pregnant Women Expansion program totaled \$886,749.

TS-MEP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** The TS-MEP will increase the average number of adults aged 19–64 years receiving inpatient and outpatient hospital reimbursements and benefits through the Hospital Benefit Coverage.
 - **Progress: On Track, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. During this quarter, the TS-MEP initiative Hospital Benefit Coverage (HBC) provided inpatient and outpatient hospital reimbursements and benefits to 696 adults aged 19–64. This is a slight increase of 43 in the number of adults served over the previous quarter. Overall, the HBC program had a significant decrease during the public health emergency. This decrease is due largely to suspended cost share requirements for day one hospitalizations. Traditional Medicaid covered 20 hospital days per year for qualified adults. The HBC program has increased the number of hospital days from 20 to 24 and reduced the copay on the first day of hospitalization from 22% to 10%; though, this has been suspended as noted above. TS-MEP funds for the Hospital Benefit Coverage totaled \$3,466,959 in this quarter.

- **Indicator:** The TS-MEP will increase the average number of persons enrolled in the ARSeniors program, which expands non-institutional coverage and benefits for seniors aged 65 and over.
 - **Progress: On Track, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. The ARSeniors program expanded Medicaid coverage to 7,527 seniors during this quarter. This is an increase of 336 seniors in Arkansas. The ARSeniors program serves Arkansans 65 years or older that have incomes at or below 80% of the federal poverty level. Arkansas Medicaid benefits that are not covered by Medicare are available to ARSeniors participants. Some examples of these benefits are coverage for physician, lab, pharmacy, and inpatient services. Additionally, the ARSeniors program pays the Medicare premium to the Social Security Administration (SSA) for qualified seniors. As a result, the SSA does not withhold this premium from these seniors in their SSA benefits. TS-MEP funds for the ARSeniors program totaled \$6,319,279 during this quarter.

- **Indicator:** The TS-MEP will increase the average number of persons enrolled in the Developmental Disabilities Services, Community and Employment Supports (CES) Waiver and note the number of adults and children receiving services each quarter by county.
 - **Progress: On Track, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. During this quarter, 503 individuals were provided services through TS-MEP funds. This is a slight increase of three in the number of persons served from the previous quarter and fills the 500 TS-MEP funded slots for this program.

TS-MEP INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** While there are only 500 TS-MEP funded slots, there were 503 unique individuals served this quarter because of program participant turnover. In this quarter, a total of 78 children (18 and under) and 425 adults in 72 of 75 counties were provided services. The CES waiver provides assistance for major life activities to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. This includes activities such as living independently and working in a job in the community rather than an institutional setting. TS-MEP funding helps to reduce the waitlist for this population of Arkansans. TS-MEP funds for the CES waiver program totaled \$24,355,519 in this quarter.

UAMS-COA PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Program Description

The purpose of the UAMS Centers on Aging is to address one of the most pressing policy issues facing this country: how to care for the burgeoning number of older adults in rural community settings. The overall goal is to improve the quality of life for older adults and their families through two primary missions: an infrastructure that provides quality interdisciplinary clinical care and innovative education programs.

Program Goal

The goal of the UAMS-COA is to improve the health of older Arkansans through interdisciplinary geriatric care and innovative education programs and to influence health policy affecting older adults.

UAMS-COA EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities

The UAMS-COA continues to seek and find ways to cope with changes in healthcare systems and the needs of the population served. Some of the most encouraging opportunities are described below.

- *Distribution of services:* The UAMS-COA ordinarily offers at least minimal services to residents in a majority of Arkansas counties (this quarter, 54 out of 75 counties were served). As severe weather and lingering fears of infectious disease limited many traditional client-based services, the COA directors and clients continue to rely on digital tools and online forms of communication to meet client needs. There is evidence that these digital tools and techniques have helped the COAs provide a richer assortment of services to a broader base of clients.
- *Service innovation:* The agency continues to innovate the delivery of services to expand public access to information and educational programming throughout the state. This includes expansion of investments in virtual reality equipment that augments education related to dementia, sensory deficits, and end-of-life care (via a USDA grant). This also includes expansion of the SUCCESS family caregiver program to assist families in the wake of a home healthcare labor shortage.
- *Raising awareness:* The UAMS-COA continues raising awareness about the challenges of aging in Arkansas. Agency representatives continually pursue public relations opportunities to combat ageism, encourage successful aging practices, promote elder-care as a function of healthy communities, and generally celebrate the contributions of older adults in the state. Of particular significance in this regard, Dr. Overton-McCoy, director of the UAMS-COA, is an appointed member of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging. This appointment helps extend the agency's ability to raise awareness at the highest levels of state government.
- *Partnerships:* The UAMS-COA continues to foster partnerships to lead the state with respect to mitigating opiate abuse, monitoring falls, expanding geriatric caregiver training, reducing hunger among seniors, and increasing awareness of chronic disease. This quarter, the UAMS-COA partnered with a number of other entities to build resources for seniors in Arkansas. These partnerships include UAMS East, Harvest Regional Food Bank, Alzheimer's Arkansas, SHIPP (Senior Health Insurance Information Program), Workforce Development, AR Rehab, University of Arkansas County Extension Services, University of Arkansas, Veterans Administration, CASA (Committee Against Spousal Abuse) Women's Shelter, Alzheimer's Association, Senior Olympics, Crystal Bridges, Whole Nedz, Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention, Arkansas Diabetes Advisory Council, Department on Aging Services, first responders, community libraries, rural health clinics, elder law resources, senior housing facilities, assisted living and long-term care facilities, senior home caregiver agencies, local businesses, parks and recreation departments, and community clinics.

UAMS-COA EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities Continued

- *Enhancing the geriatric medicine workforce:* The UAMS-COA works with multiple colleges and universities across the state to recruit and train new geriatric specialists in different allied health fields. This includes sponsoring fellowships for medical students and social workers. It also includes efforts to increase high school student interest in geriatric-related careers.
- *Enhanced attention to the outlying regions:* The UAMS-COA continues expanding relationships with UAMS East Regional Campus combining resources to better serve Crittenden, Monroe, Lee, St. Francis, and Phillips counties by implementing *Walk with Ease*, the *Diabetes Empowerment Education Program*, *Cooking Matters*, and other education events. Expansion of UAMS facilities in El Dorado also helps broaden impact in the southern portion of the state.

Overall, the UAMS-COA is open to innovation and actively seeking opportunities that contribute positively to the health of older Arkansans.

Challenges

- The aging of the state's population coupled with a constantly changing market-based national healthcare model continues to be a primary challenge to the clinical aspects of this agency's mission. Pandemic burnout and labor pressures on the entire healthcare system have added further strain to an already tenuous network of specialized care. Outside of UAMS in Little Rock, there are only two specialized geriatric clinics remaining in the state. Nonetheless, the UAMS-COA remains committed to adjusting the referral process ensuring that seniors in Arkansas have the best possible access to healthcare services in places where Senior Health Clinic access is unavailable.
- Despite the availability of vaccines and treatments, UAMS-COA client populations remain some of the most vulnerable to infectious diseases due to age and underlying chronic health conditions. As health risks related to COVID-19 become more manageable, in-person opportunities are returning but much of the client population still harbors fears of infection. While online alternatives have been refined over the course of the pandemic, these alternatives cannot fully replace traditional programming (for example, exercise activities are limited by safety concerns for remote participants). Many clients in rural areas lack reliable access to online platforms. Many people in the age cohorts served by the COAs also find alternative digital activities less desirable than in-person contacts. All of these factors have contributed to limited progress in reaching new clients in an expanding population.

UAMS-COA EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Challenges Continued

- Staffing issues continue to threaten the flow of services throughout the state. This impacts both COA staffing and clinic access. Despite progress made by recently filling central leadership positions, the Delta Center and the South Arkansas COA are still missing vital staff and this is limiting service in areas of the state served by these centers. The increased demand for healthcare professionals persistently poses problems for hiring and retention, especially for hiring qualified professionals in rural counties and less-developed portions of the state (e.g., specialists in dementia assessment and management).
- Adequate supervision of COAs in more remote regions of Arkansas has always been a concern of this agency. Efforts have been made to address many of the issues but keeping staff trained and monitoring activity across the COAs remains challenging.
- Changing racial and ethnic demographics of seniors in some areas of the state necessitate planning for more inclusive communication and the development of bilingual or multilingual materials and programs.
- Due to underdeveloped infrastructure, poverty, and small and decentralized populations, the basic UAMS-COA model is more difficult to deploy in some areas of the state. For example, it is estimated that in this quarter, residents of almost one third of the 75 counties in Arkansas received no direct services from the UAMS-COA. More effort is needed to find effective modes of delivery for serving seniors in impoverished, hard-to-reach communities. These concerns escalated during the pandemic as an increasing volume of COA client services, out of necessity, shifted to an internet-based model. Client services are unavailable to many as substantial portions of the state lack reliable broadband Internet access and the effectiveness of online delivery models is questionable due to lack of resources to fully evaluate these newer service modalities.
- The agency continues developing the data collection and data processing capacity needed to fully assess program outcomes. Much progress has been made on developing a new monitoring system, but some challenges have been exacerbated by the shift to digital training modes. Efforts are underway to develop more standardized measures of health improvement associated with program participation. For example, wellness outcomes are now routinely monitored among participants in the Drums Alive and Walk With Ease programs.
- It may be time to explore and introduce new evidence-based exercise options offered to seniors in the state. Participants have been demanding more variety for several quarters but developing/implementing new programs was made more difficult by disruptions surrounding the pandemic. Some of the current options are hard to monitor for quality and safety using online interaction formats. It is important to continue efforts aimed at comparing the effectiveness of traditional modes of service delivery to newer modes of delivery.

UAMS-COA EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Challenges Continued

- Many of the programs and services offered through the UAMS-COA have an indirect effect on senior health in Arkansas. The UAMS-COA continues efforts aimed at demonstrating the net positive impact (including the economic impact) of services provided by the agency. However, the return-on-investment models have not yet been sufficiently developed. Social and economic disruptions associated with the pandemic have altered key variables and have stalled development of these return-on-investment models.
- As state and federal funding continues to evaporate, as older funding commitments end, and as inflationary pressures rise, maintaining external funding streams is more important than ever. At stake is the continuation of critical programs related to the health and well-being of older adults across Arkansas. The UAMS-COA is currently meeting the funding challenge through a patchwork of grants, awards, service contracts, donations, and volunteer support. However, the continuous search for new funding is exhausting and may only be sustainable because of the talent and extraordinary effort of the current leadership. Ensuring necessary levels of support over the long-term remains a challenge especially in an economy with high labor costs and erratic investment returns.
- Finding the time and other resources necessary to stay current with best practices in geriatric care is an enduring challenge. The UAMS-COA has put great effort into staying connected with professional organizations at the regional and national levels. In order to maintain its high quality programming, the agency is encouraged to continue allocating resources for professional development among the directors and staff.

Overall, the UAMS-COA recognizes its key challenges and has become adept at formulating short-term strategies to address them.

Evaluator Comments

Prevailing evidence suggests that the UAMS-COA continues fulfilling its mission to advance the state's agenda for successful senior health services, knowledge, and programming in Arkansas. Despite numerous strains on conventional service modalities, the UAMS-COA has enhanced senior health this quarter through the following activities:

- Maintaining alliances between nonprofit, for-profit, and state-funded agencies to better address the needs of older adults in Arkansas;
- Developing digital resources on aging-related issues that help reach broader audiences;
- Educating the community about the special needs of older adults;
- Keeping seniors active by providing exercise opportunities across the state (through multiple platforms);

UAMS-COA EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Evaluator Comments Continued

- Recognizing the necessity of fall prevention and healthy exercise education for seniors and mobilizing resources to meet the need;
- Leading efforts to develop alternative therapies for pain management;
- Leading efforts in mental health and suicide prevention in the state;
- Enhancing the healthcare workforce with geriatric training for medical professionals;
- Working to develop better models of long-term care in Arkansas;
- Working to educate family caregivers and increase the capacity for quality in-home senior healthcare;
- Focusing on dementia care and building dementia-friendly communities; and
- Addressing needs exacerbated by the pandemic such as social isolation and hunger among older adults.

Despite the fact that staffing issues disrupted some of the daily operations in parts of the state this quarter, the UAMS-COA continues to make progress in critical areas and is on a strong trajectory to meet its annual goals.

UAMS-COA INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Long-Term Objective

Improve the health status and decrease death rates of elderly Arkansans as well as obtain federal and philanthropic grant funding.

- **Indicator:** The UAMS Centers on Aging will provide multiple exercise activities to maximize the number of exercise encounters for older adults throughout the state.
 - **Progress: On Track, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal, although the effort continues to be impeded by concerns related to COVID-19. A total of 1,050 exercise encounters with senior Arkansans were counted during this reporting period with encounters distributed across five of the state's seven COAs. The exercise options have been curated by the UAMS-COA to include evidence-based programs that address the core concerns of the client population (e.g., balance/fall prevention and pain management). A majority of the 1,050 encounters were live, in-person experiences as opposed to Facebook or videoconference methods. Overall, the UAMS-COA provided approximately 175 hours of exercise programming to seniors this quarter and preliminary self-reported data suggest that these exercise options are meeting the perceived needs of participants.

- **Indicator:** The UAMS Centers on Aging will implement at least two educational offerings (annually) for evidence-based disease management programs.
 - **Progress: Exceeding Expectations**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is exceeding expectations to meet the annual goal. During this quarter, the UAMS-COA offered evidence-based educational programs that addressed a range of health priorities related to aging. This quarter, UAMS-COA staff provided 1,783 hours of educational offerings including 1,562 hours in critical focal areas: caregiving/dementia training (372 hours), healthy eating/food insecurity (151 hours), and mental health/well-being (835 hours).

- **Indicator:** On an annual basis, the UAMS Centers on Aging will obtain external funding to support programs in amounts equivalent to ATSC funding for that year.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. In this quarter, the UAMS-COA developed external support from various sources valued at approximately \$730,582. This amount exceeds the quarterly goal of \$485,949 and represents four consecutive quarters of positive fundraising. The UAMS-COA and its affiliates have elevated their productivity in securing external funding despite continuing disruptions linked to the pandemic.

UAMS-COA INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** During this quarter, \$433,058 was raised from eight different grants to support programming. The most sizable grant received this quarter was a \$354,000 award from USDA to support virtual-reality-based dementia education. Aside from grants, another large stream of funding came from the Schmieding Foundation that provided \$135,652 to support Schmieding Center operations. Additional extramural funding included community partner donations (\$28,568), UAMS core support (\$114,000), and the value of volunteer hours supplied to the COAs (\$546). The agency also received \$18,758 through contractual service agreements. Financial numbers indicate clear efforts to remain active in external fundraising. Overall, the UAMS-COA had a successful quarter of external funding by leveraging \$730,582 above the \$485,949 in quarterly funding provided through the ATSC.

Short-Term Objective

Prioritize the list of health problems and planned interventions for elderly Arkansans and increase the number of Arkansans participating in health improvement programs.

- **Indicator:** The UAMS Centers on Aging will assist local healthcare providers in maintaining the maximum number of Senior Health Clinic encounters through a continued positive relationship.
 - **Progress: On Track, Influenced by COVID-19**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. The UAMS-COA recorded 508 Senior Health Clinic encounters during this quarter. There were no recorded nursing home, inpatient, or home visits during this period. Given the diminishing capacity of general health clinics and the limited availability of specialized geriatric care in the state, UAMS-COA is doing the best it can to broker clinical services.
- **Indicator:** The UAMS Centers on Aging will provide education programming to healthcare practitioners and students of the healthcare disciplines to provide specialized training in geriatrics.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. The UAMS-COA produced 902 hours of educational presentations and specialized geriatric training opportunities attended by 344 healthcare practitioners and students during this reporting period (most of these were in-person encounters).

UAMS-COA INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** The UAMS Centers on Aging will provide educational opportunities for the community annually.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. Using live events, social media, and other means of communication, the UAMS-COA generated 21,796 community education encounters during this reporting period. While approximately 83% of these encounters occurred in person (18,084), other encounters occurred via telephone or online platforms (e.g., 2,923 encounters were recorded from Facebook).

- **Indicator:** On an annual basis, the UAMS Centers on Aging will develop a list of health problems that should be prioritized and education-related interventions that will be implemented for older Arkansans.
 - **Progress: Met**
 - **Activity:** This indicator has been met for the year and no further progress is needed. Planning for FY23 was completed during the final quarter of FY22. A list of prioritized problems and interventions was generated. The list is similar to the FY22 priorities and includes a continued emphasis on fall reduction and healthy activity, a revised emphasis on healthy eating and food insecurity, an emphasis on caregiving/dementia training, and an emphasis on mental health/well-being (new to FY23). The COA directors will continue to monitor the current and emerging needs of older Arkansans and make adjustments if necessary.

UAMS-COA TESTIMONIAL

Program Praise from Participants and Partners

Participants in the *Walk with Ease* program at the South Central COA shared the following:

- "My hip joint doesn't hurt as much now since I've learned how to stretch. Thank you so much! I will be happy to take the class again."
- "Now I know the importance of warming up, stretching, and how to perform strengthening exercises."
- "I learned a lot that's beneficial to my health and arthritis pain."

Participants of educational and exercise programming at the Schmieding Center shared the following:

- "[This program] has made me aware that I need to combine using my brain at the same time that I use my body. Just sitting and working on puzzles is good. Just walking and/or lifting hand weights is good. But if you combine those two, your brain really gets a workout! Your balance improves as well as your memory and reaction time. I have attended these sessions since they were started by the Schmieding Center and Jeremy is an excellent trainer."
- "The classes give me a reason to get up on Tuesday and Friday. They helped with my thinking, encouraging me to consider multiple stimuli. The Friday classes were often more challenging. Jeremy is a great therapist!"
- "It has given me a structure to exercise on a regular basis. Hopefully, it has helped with the cognitive decline I have been experiencing since my Parkinson's diagnosis and the normal aging process. I am so grateful to our OT instructor for his encouragement, dedication, and positive can-do attitude he brings to the class each week."

Organizations that partner with the Schmieding Center shared the following feedback:

- "The Alzheimer's Association is privileged to have the Schmieding Center as one of our strongest community partners in Arkansas. As we work to forward our mission of leading the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia, we require key community partners to work alongside us to ensure we drive risk reduction and early detection and maximize quality care and support to all those affected. The Schmieding Center team's work perfectly aligns with our mission as they lead Alzheimer's and dementia support groups, community listening sessions, caregiver training, and early-stage engagement programs."
- "Brandi Schneider and the team at the Schmieding Center have been phenomenal partners with our University of Arkansas|UAMS Occupational Therapy Doctoral Program. The center has supported our students with the completion of projects that contribute to caregiver wellness for individuals caring for those with forms of dementia and Parkinson's Disease. These projects made possible through this partnership, have made a huge impact on our students and the community. The support, resources, and opportunities that the Schmieding Center has to provide to our community are priceless!"

UAMS EAST PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Program Description

The University of Arkansas Medical Sciences East Regional Campus provides healthcare outreach services to seven counties including St. Francis, Lee, Phillips, Chicot, Desha, Monroe, and Crittenden counties. The UAMS East Regional Campus, formerly known as the Delta Area Health Education Center and UAMS East, was established in 1990 with the purpose of providing health education to underserved populations in the Arkansas Delta region. The counties and populations served by the UAMS East Regional Campus are some of the unhealthiest in the state with limited access to healthcare services being one of the challenges. As a result of limited access and health challenges, the UAMS East Regional Campus has become a full-service health education center with a focus on wellness and prevention for this region. The program has shown a steady increase in encounters with the resident population and produced a positive impact on the health and wellness of the region. Programs to address local health needs of residents are being implemented in partnership with more than 100 different agencies. The overall mission of the UAMS East Regional Campus is to improve the health of the Delta's population. Goals include increasing the number of communities and clients served and increasing access to primary care providers in underserved counties.

Program Goal

The goal of the UAMS East Regional Campus is to recruit and retain healthcare professionals and to provide community-based healthcare and education to improve the health of the people residing in the Delta region.

UAMS EAST EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Opportunities

Opportunities reported by UAMS East are as follows:

- UAMS East will be co-sponsoring the Alzheimer's Walk in Phillips County with Alzheimer's Arkansas. *Walking on Sunshine* will be held at UAMS East on September 30, 2023.
- UAMS East will be writing a grant to receive the Naloxone Hero Program which will help cover the cost of the Naloxone Kits, and trained UAMS East staff will be providing both the training and kits to community members.
- The UAMS East director attended the professional development session at the Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative Area School District Parent and Family Engagement event. This program provided the opportunity for UAMS East to share information with attendees about UAMS East services and programs provided to local schools and daycares in the area.
- The UAMS East director participated in an interview with Project Heal Rural Arkansas. This research project is looking at violence specifically in men in rural populations. UAMS East shared thoughts about the program, need, and best ways for reaching this population group and offered support, assistance, and partnership if needed in the Phillips County area.
- UAMS East West Memphis staff attended the Infant Child Death Review (ICDR) conference in Little Rock. The conference presented information to reach more families as well as pedestrian safety and SMART projects. The event also provided hands-on experiences on reviewing infant/child death scenarios.
- UAMS East West Memphis outreach staff attended the Arkansas Children's Hospital Child Passenger Safety Technician CEU Scavenger Hunt. This allowed participants to review various aspects of car seat and vehicle safety, which was very helpful to brush up on knowledge and skills when it comes to child passenger safety.
- UAMS East West Memphis Director Ollie White served as Mistress of Ceremony for the Sisterhood Strut sponsored by the Arkansas Birthing Project which was held in Lonoke, Arkansas. The keynote speaker was Dr. Keneshia Bryant from UAMS. UAMS East is collaborating with the Arkansas Birth Project to start a birthing project in Crittenden County. The mission of the Arkansas Birthing Project is to serve pregnant women and their families who need health care and social support to improve the chances of their babies being born healthy.
- UAMS East Director Stephanie Loveless had the opportunity to present UAMS East *Good Food Rx* and its prescription model to board members of the Phillip County Community Foundation/Arkansas Community Foundation. Members were excited that they were able to observe the program in action. They attended both the education program followed by the market style food distribution.

UAMS EAST EVALUATOR SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Challenges

UAMS East is working at full capacity with current staff. Many staff have taken on additional jobs to meet the needs of the communities. Additional staff are always needed and valuable but currently no new positions are being approved by UAMS.

Evaluator Comments

UAMS East is on track for all of the indicators this quarter. The number of screenings conducted were down this quarter but on track for the year. The number of patient visits at the clinic has remained stable this year, although in spite of the recruitment efforts from UAMS East, the number of new patients this quarter was below the previous level. Although new patient recruitment was down, the metrics for patient outcomes remain above the targeted goals. A highlight of this quarter was the *Good Food Rx* program. This program provides nutritious food as well as education and skills building opportunities to learn to prepare a mostly plant based diet. The participants' comments indicate a change in mindset toward food as nutrition and medicine.

UAMS EAST INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Long-Term Objective

Increase the number of health professionals practicing in the UAMS East Regional Campus service areas.

■ **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will maintain the number of students participating in pre-health professions recruitment activities.

- **Progress: On Track**

- **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. The UAMS East Regional Campus has been busy with recruiting students into health careers this quarter. The education coordinator provided a health career presentation for 48 students in 9th and 10th grades at Marvell Academy. Students participated in hands-on activities during the presentation. The education coordinator was one of the *M*A*S*H* (Medical Applications of Science for Health) state coordinators for UAMS this spring. This year, UAMS established a foundation with the Arkansas Farm Bureau, called the Farm Bureau Fund for Excellence, which funded the camps throughout the state. There were approximately 316 students in the summer camps: *M*A*S*H*, *Mini M*A*S*H*, and *CHAMPS*. UAMS East had 26 students in three camps in Helena-West Helena, West Memphis, and Dumas. Additionally, the coordinator spoke at the *M*A*S*H* camp in Paragould to 15 students.

■ **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will continue to provide assistance to health professions students and residents, including RN to BSN and BSN to MSN students, medical students and other interns.

- **Progress: On Track**

- **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. UAMS East Regional Campus currently has one student in the UAMS Master's program and one BSN student in the Arkansas State University program that the agency is assisting.

UAMS EAST INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

Short-Term Objective

Increase the number of communities and clients served through UAMS East Regional Campus.

- **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will maintain the number of clients receiving health screenings, referrals to primary care physicians, and education on chronic disease prevention and management within 10% of the previous year.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. UAMS East Regional Campus provided biometric screenings to 50 participants at the *Mobile Food Drop Off*. Clients received free blood pressure checks, cholesterol, blood sugar, BMI, and waist circumference assessments. UAMS East Lake Village and Chicot Memorial Medical Center were awarded funding by the Arkansas Minority Health Commission to implement the worksite wellness initiative in Chicot County. This initiative provided health screenings and educational outreach to all participants at Superior Uniform for first shift and night shift workers. Over 150 employees attended these wellness events. UAMS East Lake Village along with other community partners filled the Lake Village Expo Center for a community wide health and wellness expo. Participants received free health screenings, educational information, healthy snacks and AR Saves walkthrough Mega Brain Exhibit; 27 attendees had biometric screenings. Also, 46 participants took part in biometric screenings at Parents Night at a McGehee School. UAMS East Lake Village held blood pressure screenings for members of the Chicot Memorial Community Center for 86 members.
 - Abnormal Screening Results: blood pressure (136), BMI (69), cholesterol (58), waist circumference (58), glucose (18).
- **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will maintain a robust health education promotion and prevention program for area youth and adults.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. This quarter, UAMS East Regional Campus provided health education promotion and prevention programs for a total of 9,235 youth and adults. There were 5,675 youth and 3,560 adults that participated in or received health education services this quarter.
 - UAMS East partnered with U of A Cooperative Extension to provide *Nutrition 101* for youth at the Phillips County Boys & Girls Club. Forty youth learned about *My Plate*, healthy eating, exercising, and each week they helped prepare a healthy snack.

UAMS EAST INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** UAMS East held the Phillips County Opioid Task Force Meeting this quarter, which was a first since COVID. The multi-community group was excited to begin its work again. More than 60 community members attended the first meeting including members of the fire department, police, ambulance, hospital, local college, schools, health departments, and various other agencies. UAMS East will take the lead in this group and will be writing a grant to begin applications to the Arkansas Opioid Recovery Task Force and to provide the Naloxone Hero Program in Phillips County. UAMS East distributed 100 dental and personal hygiene kits to community members that are receiving food boxes at the Mobile Drop Off. UAMS East provided information and presentations to local churches that will be participating in the summer enrichment program held in Helena. Youth and adults were provided information on nutrition, healthy eating, exercise and chronic disease prevention.
- UAMS East Lake Village, in collaboration with Desha County Cooperative Extension, offered Teen Cuisine. This cooking program is designed to teach youth grades 6-12 important life skills to promote optimal health. The curriculum addresses key concepts about nutrition, food preparation, cooking, food safety, and physical activity by using strategies that enhance learning and behavior change. Teen Cuisine aims to empower teens to adopt healthier lifestyles by teaching them the knowledge and skills needed to prepare nutritious snacks and meals at home. UAMS East Lake Village completed the Childcare and Baby Safety classes at East Central Arkansas Community Correction Center (ECACC). There were a total of 120 participants. UAMS East Lake Village and Helena provided American Heart Association CPR. Heartsaver CPR was held for 85 community members, daycare providers, police officers, courthouse employees, and high school students. Also, Basic Life Support was held for 13 healthcare providers.
- UAMS East West Memphis attended a resource fair at the ECACC for the residents and distributed information on nutrition, diabetes, car seat safety, and general health. All 350 residents of the facility visited each table. UAMS East Helena and West Memphis completed the Kids for Health program for 2,139 youth in five local schools. Students participated in learning about their health, body, and world. UAMS East Lake Village and West Memphis held Baby Safety Showers and car seat installation for 17 expecting moms. UAMS East Lake Village held Parenting for Success classes for 20 inmates at the ECACC campus in West Memphis. The students completed eight two-hour sessions of parenting topics and received certificates from the Crittenden DHS Family Services Department. Completion of these classes is viewed very positively when the parents petition the court to regain custody of their children. A total of 160 completed the class.

UAMS EAST INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will maintain the number of clients participating in exercise programs offered by UAMS East Regional Campus within 10% of the previous year.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. This quarter, UAMS East Fitness Center and walking track encounters totaled 7,805. UAMS East continued its group exercise classes this quarter. Yoga was conducted for 460 participants, while Silver Sneakers classes have been conducted for 207 participants. UAMS East Lake Village helps provide support and education to members of the Community Outreach Center. This quarter, there were 1,833 visits at the center. Also this quarter, exercise classes were offered at McGehee Methodist Church for 328 participants. UAMS East held Zumba classes for 266 participants, Line Dancing for 165, and Walk Away the Pounds for 100 participants.

- **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will provide medical library services to consumers, students, and health professionals.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. UAMS East Regional Campus Medical Resource Library provided support to healthcare professionals and students through literature searches and teaching materials. This quarter, 14 nursing students and 18 other healthcare professionals utilized the library. The library also provided support to 1,389 consumers, circulated 39 books and 137 AV's materials, and 32 electronic searches were conducted. UAMS East Medical Resource Library provided assistance to Entergy for an employee health fair. Additionally, the library provided resources to Lee County Cooperative Clinic for 1,200 patients.

- **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will plan and implement a Rural Residency Training Track for Family Medicine in Helena, in partnership with the UAMS South Central residency program.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. UAMS Family Medical Center (FMC) is slowly trying to build the foundation for the RRT. The FMC must increase patient volume before applying. This is a continued work in progress.

- **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will increase the number of patient encounters by 5% annually at the UAMS Family Medical Center in Helena.
 - **Progress: On Track**
 - **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. The UAMS FMC continues to serve the area as a patient-centered medical home clinic, where patients can be referred to two health coaches for smoking cessation, weight loss, and chronic disease management. The UAMS FMC had a total of 1,159 patient visits in 65 days of clinic this quarter.

UAMS EAST INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** The clinic was closed during the end of May for three days due to a citywide water issue. There were 49 new patients this quarter. UAMS East Family Medical Center staff is utilizing primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention measures to improve the health of the rural delta population.
- As part of a pilot research study, UAMS East seeks to alleviate chronic health conditions and food insecurity by launching a food-as-medicine research study called *Good Food Rx*. It launched March 14, 2023 and had great participation and feedback from clients. This pilot research study recruited participants who are 18 years old and older, a current patient at UAMS FMC in Helena, and are diagnosed with one of the following chronic health conditions: high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and/or obesity. Aside from seeking to determine if using food as medicine can improve chronic health conditions, the study also seeks to encourage participants to make dietary changes by increasing consumption of nutritious foods, particularly fruits and vegetable, reduce food insecurity by making it easier for participants to access nutritious foods to ensure they are eating a balanced diet, and increase nutrition literacy.
 - On the second Tuesday of each month, research participants attend a 20-minute nutrition education class on a variety of topics such as reading food labels, serving sizes and portion sizes, water intake, exercise, *My Plate*, and more. Participants also receive nutrition education literature and motivational giveaways to help them towards their health journey, show the importance of their attendance, and express appreciation for their voluntary willingness to participate in the study. The giveaways are used to motivate and incentivize the participants for achieving goals or milestones which helps them stay focused and committed.
 - After each class, participants go to the UAMS East auditorium where they select their own nutrient dense foods referred to as “client choice” from an “indoor style market.” Client choice allows people to choose for themselves what food they receive. It also cuts down on waste and allows people to have autonomy in their food choices. Furthermore, since the inception of the study, more participants have reported increased access to nutritious food, better management of their health and decreased food insecurity.
 - Well Fed staff and volunteers, as well as designated UAMS East staff, accompany participants to ensure they are choosing foods according to their diet and diagnoses. Participants are grouped into one of three diets: the Mediterranean Diet (obesity), DASH Diet (high blood pressure) or Diabetes Diet (diabetes). Participants on the Mediterranean Diet received 40 pounds of food. Participants on the DASH Diet received 45 pounds of food, and those on the Diabetes diet received 39.2 pounds of food. Currently, there are 21 active participants in the research study.

UAMS EAST INDICATORS AND PROGRESS

- **Activity continued:** Participants will actively be in the study for 12 months. Furthermore, they will complete short surveys and have their BMI/weight, blood pressure, and A1c levels checked every three months. Cholesterol levels will be checked every six months. Participants will inactively be in the study an additional 12 months where the same data collected during the active part of the study will be collected from the participants for comparison to the active portion of the study. This study is supported by the USDA, the UAMS Chancellor's Circle, Arkansas Community Foundation, and Well Fed.
- The UAMS FMC continues its commitment to the Patient-Centered Medical Home Program (PCMH). The clinic receives information on utilization measure performance from Arkansas Blue Cross & Blue Shield and has met several of the quality metric performances for controlling blood pressure, diabetes HbA1c, breast cancer screenings, and antidepressant medication management. The metric for blood pressure control is about 70% and the clinic met an 80% performance measure. The breast cancer screening target metric is > 65% and the clinic met an 80% performance measure. The antidepressant medication management target metric is >60% and the clinic scored 100% on this performance measure.
- UAMS East Regional Centers and the FMC received provider scorecards for services and UAMS East met measures for A1cs checked, hypertension, foot exams, mammogram exams, and depression screenings. It is important to note that only 2.38% of the clinic patients have not had their A1c tested in the last 12 months. The depression screening scorecard is above the target of 60% of patients screened. The clinic scored 86.1% and screens at every visit.
- UAMS East health coaches provided coaching to 25 referred clinic patients. Also, health coaches provided smoking cessation to one patient this quarter. One patient quit chewing tobacco. Also, the UAMS FMC staff are working hard on compliance of patients. UAMS FMC has doubled compliance for the percentage of patients 18 years of age and older who were screened for tobacco use one or more times in the last two years and who received cessation counseling and intervention. The metrics were 14.29 % in January 2023 and now are at 40.54% in June 2023.

■ **Indicator:** The UAMS East Regional Campus will provide diabetes education to at least 100 community members annually.

- **Progress: On Track**
- **Activity:** This indicator is on track to meet the annual goal. UAMS East provided diabetes education and outreach to over 40 community members. UAMS East West Memphis provided the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program, and 135 women were impacted through these programs.

UAMS EAST TESTIMONIAL

Food as Medicine Program Empowers Participants

The *Good Food Rx* program has been a success thus far as participants are gaining valuable knowledge and a new relationship with food. Comments from program participants are offered below.

- “*Good Food Rx* gives me great food every month. I also enjoy the nutrition education lessons. I am learning to eat better, exercise, and manage my diabetes better for myself and for my family. LaShanda is a great instructor that has helped me prepare my mind for my daily struggles. I have a stressful job that causes me to be an emotional eater from time to time. I really thank her for her hard work and for keeping me on task from month to month.”
- “This is a good program. I have learned a lot in class. Learning to eat right is a LIFE SAVER!”
- “I have discovered that I am an emotional eater. Since I started this program, I look at food differently. I find healthier ways to cope and choose healthier foods to eat.”
- “Since joining the study, I have realized that I don’t have to eat a full plate of food to get full. I eat the right portion sizes. I also eat more fruits and vegetables and less junk food. I have really enjoyed the nutrition education classes as well as the healthy foods. I really love the vegetables.”
- “The program is great! All the people involved have been very kind and helpful. I have been eating more fruits and vegetables because of this program. The nutrition education classes have taught me a lot. The recipes also help me to choose healthier foods and cook healthy.”
- “This program has motivated me to eat healthier for myself and my family. If this program was around 20 years ago, I wouldn’t have gone through my health turmoil. I am extremely grateful LaShanda invited me to join the program.”
- “Being in this program has really helped me on my weight loss and healthy foods journey. I eat smaller portions. I feel much better since I have changed my eating habits. Now, I feel great enough to walk in the evening when I get off work.”
- “I have lost weight since starting this program. I love my new measurements! I have more self-control when it comes to food and I eat smaller portion sizes. I am also more energetic and alert! My A1c has dropped from 8.3 to 6! This program gives me hope!”
- “I am more mindful of eating vegetables. I am also more conscious of eating fruits to replace my sugar cravings, which is a big issue of mine. I enjoy being in a group setting. It helps me keep a realistic view of my goals and progress. I am succeeding!”
- “I am loving this program! The recipes are great! The food selection is awesome! I loved the portion control containers that we received! I have lost inches and a few pounds. I also drink more water, which is a huge goal for me. I have more self-control of what I eat and drink. I have had two six-packs of Diet Dr. Pepper in my trunk for months and I have not drank any of them. The temptation to drink them is not there. I have even noticed a change in my digestive system. My eyeglass prescription has changed. My doctor said he could not believe my vision has improved.”

SUMMARY

Across all programs, the vast majority of indicators were on track to meet annual goals. Programs evaluated at the end of FY23 in this report (MHI, TPCP) met 19 of 26 indicators, with four indicators in progress towards five-year goals, and three indicators unmet for the fiscal year. In all, 22% of indicators were influenced by COVID-19 (see Table 1).

Explanation of Unmet Indicators

- **Minority Health Initiative**

- The MHI provided more than 2,000 glucose screenings for the fiscal year, but fell short in providing enough glucose screenings to meet the stated goal, which is to maintain a the number of screenings each year within 10% of the previous year.

- **Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program**

- The indicator related to the rate of sales-to-minor violations was not met. In FY23, the rate was 9.76%, higher than the goal of 6.5%. Even though this goal was unmet, a downward trend was demonstrated in FY23 as compared to FY22 (rate of 12.65%). Arkansas Tobacco Control continued to offer educational sessions for retailers and store owners, reaching more than 600 Arkansans during FY23.
- During FY23, one new Project Prevent school chapter was established in a Red County, which did not meet the goal of seven new chapters. The TPCP continues to expend efforts towards this goal, and routinely facilitates statewide meetings for hundreds of students.

ATSC-funded programs performed well during the quarter to stay on track with their indicator goals. Programs evaluated for FY23 efforts (MHI, TPCP) overcame obstacles (like a hiring freeze) and met a vast majority of their indicators. Despite program challenges noted by all, ATSC-funded programs proved persistent and remained creative and resilient through these challenges. Evaluators also reported that programs continued to engaged new and diverse partnerships; maintained important commitments to serve vulnerable populations, like new mothers or those with dementia; continued to support the growth of public health practitioners in the state; and supported unique and meaningful scientific knowledge that advances health and well-being.

SUMMARY

Table 1. Indicator Progress Across Programs

PROGRAM	TOTAL INDICATORS	MET	UNMET	EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS	ON TRACK	IN PROGRESS TOWARDS LONG-TERM GOAL	COVID-19 INFLUENCED	OVERALL PROGRESS
ABI	7	--	--	--	7	--	--	100% On Track
COPH	9	--	--	--	9	--	--	100% On Track
MHI (FY23)	7	5	1	--	--	1	--	86% In Progress or Met
TPCP (FY23)	19	14	2	--	--	3	12	89% In Progress or Met
TS-MEP	5	--	--	--	5	--	5	100% On Track
UAMS-COA	7	1	--	1	5	--	2	100% On Track or Better
UAMS East	9	--	--	--	9	--	--	100% On Track or Better
TOTAL	63	20	3	1	37	5	19	95% In Progress or Better
							TOTAL COVID-19 INFLUENCED	30% COVID-19 Influenced

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