

# THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A PHYSICIAN IN ARKANSAS

## High School (4 Years)

Many Arkansas high school students participate in MASH (Medical Applications of Science for Health)<sup>1</sup> or CHAMPS (Community Health Applied in Medical Public Service),<sup>2</sup> enrichment programs designed to inspire students to pursue healthcare careers.

Some STEM-focused programs offer health-related courses to strengthen students' foundation in medical sciences.



**ABOUT 400 ARKANSAS STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN MASH EACH SUMMER<sup>3</sup>**

1

A look at the steps along the way, from high school to medical practice.

2

## Undergraduate Education (4 Years)

Premed courses include advanced biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics. There are several support programs for college students interested in medical school, including the Medical Scholars in Public Health (MSPH) Postbaccalaureate Program<sup>4</sup> and the Pre-Health Scholars Program,<sup>5</sup> both at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), as well as the University of Arkansas Premedical Program.<sup>6</sup>

## Medical School (4 Years)

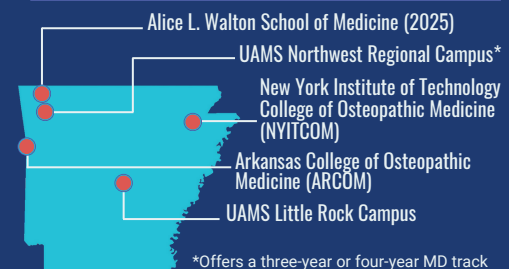
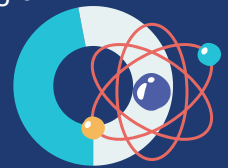
**PROGRAM TYPES.** Arkansas has three medical schools: one Doctor of Medicine (MD)-granting program and two Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)-granting programs. MDs follow a more traditional medical education, while DOs incorporate holistic medicine approaches. A fourth school is expected to open in 2025.

**MEDICAL COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST (MCAT).** The MCAT tests problem-solving, critical thinking, and scientific knowledge. Some universities, including UAMS and the University of Arkansas,<sup>9</sup> offer MCAT coaching to help students prepare and improve their chances of success on the test.

**MEDICAL EDUCATION.** Medical school education provides additional scientific coursework followed by required and elective clinical rotations. This education often includes interprofessional team-learning to encourage collaboration among students and faculty from various health professions, which is designed to promote comprehensive patient care.

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**47% OF THE 2021 MSPH CLASS WAS ACCEPTED TO MEDICAL SCHOOL<sup>7,8</sup>**



**501.7 IS THE AVERAGE MCAT SCORE FOR ARKANSAS STUDENTS APPLYING TO MD-GRANTING PROGRAMS, COMPARED TO 506.3 NATIONWIDE.<sup>10</sup> IN 2023, THE AVERAGE MCAT SCORE OF THOSE ACCEPTED AT UAMS WAS 508.<sup>11</sup>**

**PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS APPLYING WHO GO ON TO ENROLL\***

**5.7%: ARCOM<sup>12</sup>**

**7.1%: UAMS<sup>11</sup>**

\*NYITCOM combines statistics for its Long Island and Arkansas campuses; a rate for the Arkansas campus alone is not available. In-state applicants are more likely to enroll in Arkansas medical schools compared to all applicants. For example, more than 50% of in-state applicants enrolled at UAMS for the 2023-24 school year.<sup>13</sup>

## Residency Training (3-7 Years)

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**THE MATCH.** This process, facilitated by the National Resident Matching Program, aligns graduating medical students with U.S. residency programs using a computerized algorithm. Match Day reveals residency placements, while the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program offers a second chance for unmatched students to secure positions. Unmatched students may pursue research, education, or clinical experience before reapplying. Additionally, the Arkansas Community Match Program incentivizes medical graduates to practice in rural Arkansas with state/local funding.<sup>14</sup>

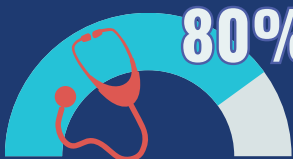


**RESIDENCY.** Residency training in Arkansas involves supervised experience in diverse specialties in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Federal funding for education following medical school, especially through Medicare, influences the availability and focus of these programs. Arkansas medical schools and health systems have increased residency slots in recent years. These partnerships focus on internal medicine, family practice, and various specialties, particularly in underserved areas, to retain doctors within the state.



ARKANSAS MEDICAL SCHOOLS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS HAVE INCREASED RESIDENCY SLOTS BY 70% SINCE 2017<sup>15</sup>

- AS OF JANUARY 2024, THERE WERE 1,104 RESIDENTS IN TRAINING IN ARKANSAS<sup>16</sup>



80% OF THOSE WHO COMPLETE MEDICAL SCHOOL AND RESIDENCY IN ARKANSAS STAY IN THE STATE TO PRACTICE<sup>17</sup>

## Fellowships (Optional, 1-3 Years)

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Post-residency fellowships provide advanced, specialized training for medical graduates. These programs are conducted in a variety of clinical learning settings. 2023 marked a historic high in the number of fellowship appointments.<sup>18</sup>



AS OF JANUARY 2024, THERE WERE 145 FELLOWS IN ARKANSAS<sup>16</sup>

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## Medical Practice

**LICENSURE.** Arkansas requires medical school graduates to pass a licensing exam and complete at least one year of internship or residency training for state licensing.<sup>19</sup> Physicians may also pursue certification by nationally recognized specialty boards.

- 7,065 ACTIVE MD LICENSES IN ARKANSAS
- 562 ACTIVE DO LICENSES IN ARKANSAS<sup>20</sup>

**EXAMS.** The United States Medical Licensing Examination, required for MD graduates, evaluates scientific knowledge and clinical skills. The Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination, required for DO graduates, tests osteopathic principles and skills.

### CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION.

Continuing education is required for ongoing license maintenance. All Arkansas licensees must complete 20 hours per year, with at least one hour related to prescribing opioids.<sup>21</sup>

### NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION.

Physicians may also pursue specialized training toward board certification in various specialties. Most boards require periodic recertification for each specialty.