

THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A PHYSICIAN IN ARKANSAS

OCTOBER 2026

High School (4 Years)

Many Arkansas high school students participate in MASH (Medical Applications of Science for Health),¹ a program designed to inspire students to pursue careers in health care. MASH is sponsored by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and hosted by healthcare and education partners across the state, including the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education (ACHE).² Similar programs include CHAMPS (Community Health Applied in Medical Public Service),³ offered by UAMS, and Project H.E.A.R.T. (Health Education, Advocacy, Reflection, and Training),⁴ offered by NYITCOM at Arkansas State University. Some high schools also offer health-related concurrent credit courses.

6,599

AR high school students were enrolled in health-related concurrent credit courses during the 2025-26 school year.⁵

1

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

2

Undergraduate Education (4 Years)

PREMED. Premed degree plans include courses in advanced biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, focusing on pre-requisites to medical school entry. Some premed degree programs offer guaranteed and/or accelerated pathways to medical school admission for both allopathic and osteopathic programs in Arkansas.⁶ There are also several support programs for college students completing these degrees and/or interested in medical school.⁷

THE MEDICAL COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST (MCAT). The MCAT tests problem-solving, critical thinking, and scientific knowledge, and is required with admissions applications. Some universities, including UAMS and the University of Arkansas, offer MCAT coaching to help students prepare for and improve their chances of success on the test.⁸ Prospective applicants must begin preparing for and taking the MCAT early, as most medical school admissions applications are due early in the fall prior to each entrance year.

3

Medical School (4 Years)

Medical school education provides additional scientific coursework followed by required and elective clinical rotations. This education incorporates interprofessional team learning among students and faculty from various health professions.

Arkansas Medical School Campuses

- 1 University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)
Established 1879
- 2 University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Northwest Regional Campus
Established 2007
- 3 New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM)
Established 2016
- 4 Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine (ARCOM)
Established 2017
- 5 Alice L. Walton School of Medicine (AWSOM)
Established 2021



500+

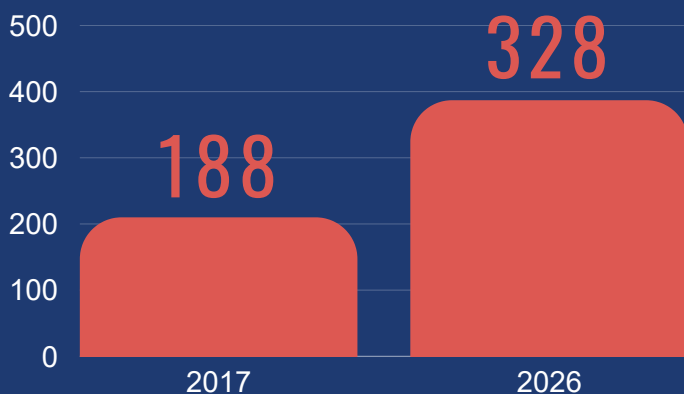
Most Arkansas medical schools require an MCAT score of 500+. The average score of a successful UAMS applicant in 2026 was 510.^{9,10,11}

AVAILABLE ARKANSAS PROGRAMS. Arkansas has four medical schools: two Doctor of Medicine (MD)-granting programs and two Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)-granting programs. MDs follow a more traditional medical education, while DOs incorporate holistic medicine approaches.

Residency Training (3-7 Years)

THE MATCH. This process, facilitated by the National Resident Matching Program, aligns graduating medical students with U.S. residency programs using a computer 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.¹²

First-Year Arkansas Medical Residency Positions Filled^{13,14}



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.

1,193 RESIDENTS IN TRAINING
IN ARKANSAS¹⁵

4

5

Fellowships (Optional, 1-3 Years)

Post-residency fellowships provide advanced, specialized training for medical graduates. These programs are conducted in a variety of clinical learning settings.

150 FELLOWS IN
ARKANSAS¹⁵

6

Medical Practice

LICENSURE/EXAMS. To obtain a medical license, MD graduates must pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), which evaluates scientific knowledge and clinical skills.¹⁶ DO graduates may take either USMLE or the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medicine Licensing Examination of the United States (COMLEX-USA),¹⁷ which tests osteopathic principles and skills. International medical graduates must meet additional requirements to gain their license.¹⁶

7,337 ACTIVE MD LICENSES
IN ARKANSAS¹⁸

732 ACTIVE DO LICENSES
IN ARKANSAS¹⁸

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION. Continuing education is required for ongoing license maintenance. Arkansas licensees must complete 20 hours per year, with at least one hour related to prescribing opioids.¹⁹

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION. Physicians may also pursue specialized training toward board certification in various specialties. Most boards require periodic recertification for each specialty. Board certification is not required for an Arkansas medical license, but may be required by employers or health plans.