

The Arkansas Rural Health Academy

A training branch of the Arkansas Rural Health Partnership

THE FACTS

RURAL LANDSCAPE

Approximately 41% of Arkansas is considered rural.¹

Rural residents experience significant access barriers to healthcare and education, including socioeconomic factors and structural barriers.

HEALTH WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Much of rural Arkansas is designated by HRSA as a health professional shortage area and medically underserved area.² Workforce gaps in entry-level frontline health positions create bottleneck delays and complications for patients accessing care in a variety of settings (emergency medicine, clinic & hospital).

ACCESS BARRIERS

Students require additional support and flexibility due to low educational attainment, long travel distances, childcare cost burden, and income. [ARHP service area averages: 84.9% high school graduate, 15.8% bachelor's degree or higher³; mean travel time to work: 23 min³; child-care cost burden: 27%⁴; Median household income: \$44,661³]



What if there was a way to efficiently and effectively train rural residents to meet the immediate needs of rural health workforce partners?

In July 2024, the Arkansas Rural Health Partnership (ARHP) launched the Arkansas Rural Health Academy (ARHA). The innovative, mobile training academy is designed to meet the certification, degree-path, and continuing education training needs of future and existing health workforce in rural settings. Training offerings vary in length and intensity, with numerous options to promote accessibility (including virtual & local, in-person classes, apprenticeships & clinical experiences). Some courses are as short as a few hours (i.e. CPR), while others span one-day (i.e. Mental Health First Aid), several months (i.e. Community Health Worker certification), or up to two years (i.e. billing & coding specialist). Academy offerings are intended to meet individuals where they are at in life, providing vital student/or and career support to ensure a meaningful translation of knowledge into a rewarding health career. Identified training offerings strive to meet labor

market and/or continuing education needs in rural healthcare professionals of every background, while greatly reducing common access barriers to training programs. The Academy leverages existing ARHP infrastructure (mobile health workforce unit, health careers website, scholarship funds, board of directors, senior leaders, and staff) and coordinates with diverse partners to successfully train, recruit, and retain rural residents in rewarding, local health careers.

Vision:

Transforming rural healthcare, one student at a time.

Mission:

Empower and train the next generation of the rural Arkansas health workforce through innovative, accessible, and affordable certificate and degree path programs, built for and by rural residents.

ACADEMY HEADQUARTERS:

4747 Dusty Lake Road
Pine Bluff, AR 71603

MOBILIZING A RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

Core Values:

- **The foundation of a strong and sustainable rural health workforce hinges on strategic investment in rural residents.** In order to build a rural health workforce that remains, rural students with a deep understanding of and commitment to their communities must be trained.
- **Rural residents are uniquely qualified to meet the health and wellness needs of their rural neighbors.** We believe that no one knows rural areas better than the individuals that choose to live, work, and play there. Rural residents understand the nuances of navigating life in rural settings and are uniquely qualified to assist and empower their fellow friends, neighbors, and co-workers through frontline health careers.
- **Training and education programs must meet critical workforce gaps in rural health systems.** The Academy is designed to train local, rural residents to fill immediate and pressing labor gaps with rural health organization partners across the state.
- **Education and training programs must be affordable, accessible & equitable.** Rural students experience significant barriers that reduce access to training related to frontline health careers. The Academy bridges known gaps by offering financial assistance and blended learning modalities (virtual & in-person classes), as well as local apprenticeships, and local clinical rotations.
- **Collaboration with diverse, cross-sector partners is vital to recruitment, training, and retention efforts.** The Academy continually engages local technical schools, community colleges, and universities to avoid duplication and competition and in no way, replaces their efforts in rural communities. The Academy works closely with local, regional, and state partners spanning diverse sectors to leverage resources, provide meaningful training opportunities, and secure placement in good jobs.
- **Rural health workforce needs continually change; so do we.** The Academy is driven by rural health organizations and designed to adapt to the changing needs of rural health employers throughout Arkansas. New Academy certificate and degree path training programs will be launched in rural regions with known education deserts as demonstrated needs and gaps are identified.
- **An investment in the rural health workforce is a short-term deposit into long-term rewards for rural communities.** A strong rural health workforce supports the health & wellness of residents, while stimulating sustainable growth in local economies and communities.

Academy Training Offerings:

The new, state-approved training center provides a diverse range of nationally recognized training opportunities for laypersons and healthcare professionals of all skill levels and career lengths. The list of training offerings grows every day. Currently, we offer:

Training for Laypersons and/or Health Professionals:

- Community Health Worker Training Institute
- Mental Health First Aid Training
- Soft Skills for Healthcare Staff

Certification Training for Clinical Providers:

- Advanced Airway Course
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support
- Advanced Coronary Syndrome
- Advanced Stroke Life Support
- Basic Life Support
- CPR & First Aid
- Pediatric Advanced Life Support
- Stop the Bleed
- Wilderness First Aid

Certification Training for EMS Providers:

- Advanced Medical Life Support
- Active Violence Emergency Response Training
- Emergency Pediatric Care/Prehospital Emergency Pediatric Provider
- Geriatric Emergency Medical Services
- International Trauma Life Support (Basic and Advanced)
- Prehospital Emergency Pediatric Provider
- Prehospital Trauma Life Support

Certificate & Degree Path Training Programs:

- Billing & Coding Specialist
- Certified Clinical Medical Assistant
- Certified Patient Care Technician
- Certified Pharmacy Technician
- Certified Phlebotomy Technician
- Community Paramedic
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Paramedic



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