

The Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) Working Toward a Healthy Arkansas



Through the years, Arkansas has used funding from the Master Settlement Agreement to improve the health of its citizens. While other states have used MSA funds for highway expansion and improvement, crop insurance and jail construction, the Arkansas Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program has remained committed to the sole purpose of the funding, addressing, and improving health issues in our state.

There are more health issues present in Arkansas than tobacco use. The programs funded by the Master Settlement Agreement, and approved by Arkansas voters, are dedicated to providing a healthy life to all Arkansans – from those easily stricken with illnesses that affect mostly minorities, to increasing state-funded financial health aid to pregnant women and elderly, to providing health care services to areas in Arkansas that desperately need it. The Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission monitors and evaluates the progress and objectives of the funded programs.

The Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act specifies that the Arkansas tobacco funds are to support seven health-related programs, and the interest generated each year supports the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission.

PROGRAM 1. TOBACCO PREVENTION AND CESSATION PROGRAM

The Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program aims to reduce the number of Arkansans who smoke or use smokeless tobacco and to reduce the number of youth who start using tobacco. Also, it educates about the negative health and financial impacts that result from tobacco use. It is managed by the Department of Health.

Program components as defined by law, are:

- Community prevention programs that reduce youth tobacco use;*
- Local school programs for education and prevention in grades K – 12;*
- Enforcement of youth tobacco control laws;*
- Statewide programs with youth involvement to increase local coalition activities;*
- Tobacco cessation programs;*
- Tobacco-related disease prevention programs;*
- A comprehensive public awareness and health promotion campaign;*
- Grants and contracts for monitoring and evaluation, as well as data gathering.*

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PROGRAM 2. ARKANSAS BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

Arkansas Biosciences Institute is an agricultural and medical research group that is dedicated to improving the health of Arkansans. Scientists with the five-member organization are focused on agricultural and basic clinical research that will lead to health improvement, especially in the area of tobacco-related diseases. It reports to the Arkansas Bioscience Institute Board.

ABI has five research areas:

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 research addressing the high level of tobacco-related illnesses in Arkansas;

Nutrition and other research aimed at preventing and treating cancer, congenital conditions and hereditary conditions;

and other areas which are related to primary ABI-supported programs.

PROGRAM 3. MEDICAID EXPANSION PROGRAM

The goal of the Medicaid Expansion Program is to create a separate and distinct component of the Arkansas Medicaid program that improves the health of Arkansans by expanding health care coverage and benefits to specific populations. The program aims to expand access to health care and to improve the health of eligible Arkansans. It is managed by the Department for Human Services.

There are four Medicaid expansion initiatives within the scope of this program:

Medicaid coverage for pregnant women;

Increased hospital benefit coverage;

Limited coverage for 19 - to 64 -year-olds;

and limited benefit packages for individuals 65 and over.

PROGRAM 4. COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health includes the shared missions of: Meeting the public health workforce needs for the future, and demonstrating how public health approaches can address the health needs of Arkansans through model community programs. Students learn, with the expert aid of local citizens, schools, hospitals and faith groups, about community-based health improvement.

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PROGRAM 5. ARKANSAS AGING INITIATIVE

Located in the Reynolds Center on Aging, the Arkansas Aging Initiative is a unit of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and provides community-based health education for senior Arkansas residents through outreach to the elderly and educational services for professionals.

PROGRAM 6. DELTA AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER

The Delta Area Health Education Center is a specific unit in the statewide AHEC system that provides clinical education throughout the state. Headquartered in Helena – West Helena, with offices in Lake Village and West Memphis, the center provides services to the seven counties in the Arkansas Delta by focusing on wellness and prevention strategies for area residents and the education of health care professionals.

PROGRAM 7. MINORITY HEALTH INITIATIVE (ARKANSAS MINORITY HEALTH COMMISSION)

The Minority Health Initiative administered by the Arkansas Minority Health Commission (AMHC) aims to ensure that all minority Arkansans have access to healthcare services that is equal to the care provided to other citizens of the state. The AMHC accomplishes this broad mission progressively through evidence-based outreach, research, collaboration, piloted projects and public policy advocacy. For example,

Outreach - Numerous health fairs across the state providing minority Arkansans access to health resource information and free screenings.

Research - Arkansas Racial & Ethical Health Disparities Study; Marianna Examination Survey on Hypertension

Collaboration/Coordination - HIV/AIDS Prevention Program - AMHC & Arkansas Department of Health HIV/STD/Hepatitis C Section's coordinated community response to reduce HIV/AIDS in minority communities. AMHC and the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission L.E.A.D. Project's collaborative effort to enhance knowledge of health equity and health risk education to youth and young adults in Arkansas high schools and colleges.

Pilot Projects - HIV initiative- Designed to address a cross section of minority community constituencies including youth, LGBT, heterosexual females, Hispanic, minority homeless and transient, and the Historically Black Colleges and Universities young adult populations through increased awareness campaigns and testing/screening sites; Sickle Cell Initiative — designed to address the need for greater awareness of the cause, symptoms and treatment of sickle cell among minority populations in Arkansas.

Public Policy Advocacy - AMHC advocates for stronger health care and equity policies on the state and national level; from regular visits with Arkansas Congressional and state legislative delegations to supporting state legislation such as Act 1489 of 2009 that requires agencies who license health professionals to provide demographic data that now includes gender and race data sets.