

# How expanding graduate medical education impacts patients and communities

Congress made history when it passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (CAA, 2021) and increased Medicare support for graduate medical education (GME) for the first time in nearly 25 years. A champion of this effort, the AAMC continues to advocate for increased investment in physician training to help strengthen and enhance the physician workforce, which remains critically important as the U.S. continues to grapple with a physician shortage. The CAA, 2021 allocated 1,000 new Medicare-supported GME positions that are currently being distributed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Additionally, the legislation included AAMC-endorsed policies to increase teaching hospital participation in Rural Training Programs (RTPs) and help address rural workforce shortages.

The AAMC-member teaching health systems and hospitals featured here are capitalizing on these new Medicare-supported GME residency positions to expand the physician workforce and improve access to care for patients and their communities.

## The University of Kansas Medical Center:

The University of Kansas Medical Center—called KU Medical Center and comprised of the University of Kansas School of Health Professions, School of Medicine, and School of Nursing, as well as the University of Kansas Hospital, a separate entity run by The University of Kansas Health System—received Medicare-supported GME residency positions to grow its OB-GYN program, a sorely needed specialty as the U.S. maternal health crisis worsens. Increased investment in GME helps not only meet the needs of local patients, but also those of patients from across the state.

“GME funding is critical to ensuring there will be physicians to care for people into the future. Back in 1997 when the federal caps were frozen, Kansas did not have an adequate number of GME residency positions. And when it was frozen...we couldn't get any more positions, so it's nice that now we're able to make up for that, even if it's on a small scale. It will have a big impact.”

— **Jeff Norvell**, MD, MBA, Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education, University of Kansas Medical Center

## University of Colorado Hospital:

In July of 2023, University of Colorado Hospital (UCH) opened a brand new 40-bed inpatient facility, which included a much-needed behavioral health unit that provided services that were not being provided by other Colorado medical institutions. Subsequently, leaders at UCH knew they needed to expand the number of psychiatry physician and residents in order to help meet 24/7 coverage needs of patients, many of whom come from rural and underserved areas. When UCH received new Medicare-supported GME residency positions, the UCH put them to good use and is already planning to apply for more positions to expand its community and public psychiatry track.

“We'd love to expand these psych services to other more remote and rural areas throughout Colorado, both in the telehealth space but also allowing psychiatry residents to rotate and work in more rural settings. We have a desperate need for more trained psychiatrists throughout the state of Colorado.”

— **Robert Davies**, Professor of Psychiatry-Med Students at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and Program Director for the Psychiatry Residency Training at UCH

## ChristianaCare:

Health care leaders at ChristianaCare are proud that their new Medicare-supported GME residency positions have enabled them to develop a psychiatry program and expand their ability to serve Delawareans in dire need of behavioral health services and decrease the wait time to see a psychiatrist from 3 months to 1 week.

“When CMS froze our [GME] cap in the 1990s, it left the financial burden of funding trainees on the institutions. Relief from that [the GME cap] would be completely welcome, because the community is growing along with the health care disparities we're seeing. We're nowhere near the workforce numbers needed, and with even more residency positions, we would love to expand residency programs in other discipline.”

— **Tabassum Salam**, ChristianaCare's Chief Learning Officer



## Vanderbilt University Medical Center:

Nashville's Vanderbilt University Medical Center is using its new Medicare-supported residency positions to expand the behavioral health workforce. This additional investment has allowed the medical center to expand its psychiatric residency program from five to six residents in each annual class, which has begun to help address the significant behavioral health provider shortage in its region. The primary training sites for the new residency program are the Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital and the adult and children's hospitals and clinics of Vanderbilt's main academic medical center campus. Vanderbilt is also aiming to increase residency rotations to the medical center's three rural-serving regional community hospitals.



### University of Chicago Medical Center:

As the only academic medical center on the south side of Chicago and the largest private health care provider of managed Medicaid care in Illinois, UChicago Medicine serves patients in the region’s most medically underserved areas, attracting patients who don’t have easy access to high-quality care. The academic health system has addressed the lack of care on the South Side through major initiatives, such as the South Side Healthy Community Organization aimed at improving access to care for more than 400,000 area residents. When UChicago Medicine was awarded new Medicare-supported medical residency positions in radiology and urology, it allowed the institution to better serve this community by ensuring the training of skilled physicians to meet the needs of this unique population.

### Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center:

Atrium Health’s Carolinas Medical Center received Medicare-supported GME positions to increase the size of its psychiatry residency program by 50%.

“The hospital where psychiatry training takes place serves a very large population of individuals whose struggles with mental health issues are compounded by financial instability and other life challenges—largely a population of urban underserved individuals who also have significant unmet mental health needs.”

— **Garth Regan**, Vice President of Government Relations at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist

With the new federal support for residency positions, Atrium Health has increased the number of qualified residents who can serve patients and has seen an immediate increase in available appointments in a setting that provides cutting-edge, well-supervised care. As these additional residents move through training to the program’s completion, Atrium will add much-needed psychiatrists to help address this critical need for access to skilled mental health services.



### Strong Memorial Hospital of the University of Rochester:

New York’s Strong Memorial Hospital of the University of Rochester is using its new Medicare-supported residency positions to expand its Surgery Residency program, allowing residents to spend more time during their training program in rotations at its rural hospitals, including FF Thompson Hospital in Canandaigua, St. James Hospital in Hornell, Noyes Memorial Hospital in Dansville, and Jones Memorial Hospital in Wellsville. This is part of a broader effort by UR Medicine to expand care in New York’s Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions, where communities face significant health disparities, difficulties attracting and retaining physicians, and have historically lacked access to care.

“By exposing residents via rotations to rural communities, we hope to spark an interest in serving underserved populations and provide pathways for careers in rural surgery.”

— **Laurie Chimento**, Director of Federal Relations and Healthcare Policy at the University of Rochester

