Katherine Harney is the Director of the Northeast Mississippi Area Health Education Center. Ms. Harney received her undergraduate degree from Mississippi State University in Communication with an emphasis in Communication Studies. Prior to working with the NE MS AHEC, Ms. Harney worked for the Institutional Review Board at MSU.

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Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) were developed in the 1970s by Congress to address an increasing shortage of health professionals. Today, there are more than 200 regional AHECs that operate in almost every state. Approximately, 120 medical schools and 600 nursing and allied health schools collaborate with AHECs to improve health for underserved populations.

AHECs can be described as a pipeline for healthcare training. We connect with youth at an early age to educate them on health career opportunities. Next, we connect health professionals to communities, and then we connect communities to better health; overall, increasing the quality and availability of health care throughout the nation.

The Northeast Mississippi Area Health Education Center is located at the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University in Starkville, Mississippi. We are committed to students, health care professionals, and institutions throughout Northeast Mississippi. We are committed to improving the health and health care of Northeast Mississippians and decreasing health disparities in the region. The counties we serve are Alcorn, Benton, Chickasaw, Clay, Itawamba, Lee, Lowndes, Monroe, Oktibbeha, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo, Tippah, and Union.

**Mission**

It is the mission of the NE MS AHEC to enhance the quality of health care in the region by recruiting and retaining health professionals, creating connections between communities and professionals and using both academic and community resources.

**Goals**

- Recruit health professionals in undeserved counties
- Publicize information regarding the availability of health profession’s education and continuing education to health professionals
- Educate youth on health career opportunities
- Improve the quality and availability of health care

The Mississippi Center for Health Workforce (MCHW), based at Mississippi State University’s Social Science Research Center, is part of the Northeast Mississippi Area Health Education Center, which—in turn—is part of a state-wide AHEC program focusing on critical health-care issues. MCHW was established in response to Mississippi’s shortage of highly trained health care professionals. MCHW’s main objective is to create a statewide database of health professional to help all Mississippians better understand the importance of these trends. The database will focus on what draws health care professionals to practice in Mississippi, what keeps them practicing in the State, and why they leave the State. The data collected will play a vital role in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in Mississippi.