

# The Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission

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James W. Davis

The North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission was created by the General Assembly as one of three entities to invest the state's portion of the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. The Commission receives one fourth of the state's tobacco settlement funds, which are to be paid in annual installments over a 25-year period.

Eighteen prominent North Carolinians were appointed to the Commission in 2001. The Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House each appointed six members. Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue was elected as Chair of the Commission. By statute, the Commission must comprise persons in public health, operation of healthcare delivery systems, healthcare practice, health research, tobacco-related healthcare issues, health promotion and disease prevention, health policy trends, healthcare for underserved populations, and child healthcare.

The purpose of the Commission is to improve the health and wellness of the people of North Carolina. To that end, the Fund may be used in a wide variety of ways. However, the Commission's enabling statute places a "priority on preventing, reducing and remedying the effects of tobacco use with an emphasis on reducing youth tobacco use."

The Commission met its self-imposed deadline of May 1, 2002, to approve an initiative on Teen Smoking Prevention and Cessation. Allocating \$6.2 million per year for three years, the Commission followed the recommendations of the Vision 2010 Coalition in establishing the initiative's structure and priorities. (Vision 2010 is a coalition of public and private health advocacy organizations with the common goal of preventing and reducing the health effects of tobacco use.) Specifically, the goals of the initiative are to prevent youth initiation of tobacco use, eliminate disparities in tobacco use among minority youth, eliminate youth exposure to second-

hand smoke, and provide treatment options for teens who want to quit.

The Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) will assist the Commission with administration and management of the initiative. Allocation of all funds will be by a vote of the full Commission, following recommendations by the Commission's Teen Smoking Prevention and Cessation Task Force. An Advisory Committee, consisting of six members of the Vision 2010 Coalition, will assist the Task Force.

The initiative is built around two major categories of grants that will fund community-based programs across the state: Community/School Prevention Programs and Priority Populations. Requests for grant proposals (RFPs) will be issued in mid-August 2002, with a deadline for submission of applications in mid-October 2002. Award recipients will be chosen by mid-December 2002.

**Community/School Prevention Programs.** Grants totalling \$2 million per year will go to new or existing local community/school prevention programs. Funded programs are expected to support partnerships between community and school leaders to develop programs that will take action against teen tobacco use, in coordination with healthcare providers, youth organizations, voluntary agencies, non-profits, faith communities, concerned volunteers, parents, substance abuse programs, and others.

**Priority Populations.** Grants totalling \$700,000 per year will go to organizations or partnerships that are capable of addressing, on a statewide basis, the disparities related to tobacco use among African American, Native American, and Latino youth. These groups may work closely with any of the community/school programs funded under this initiative.

**Paid Media.** A total of \$1.2 million per year is available for radio, television, print, and other advertising to describe

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The author is Executive Director of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission. He can be reached at jim.davis@ncmail.net.

to teens the health effects of tobacco use and secondhand smoke in order to prevent them from starting and to promote quitting. Because resources are limited for this important aspect of the program, the Commission will necessarily concentrate advertising funds in those communities where it awards grants described above. In order to maximize the impact of the paid media campaign, public service advertising will be an important factor. Therefore, applicants for the two grant categories described above will be encouraged to obtain commitments from their local media outlets to contribute advertising resources to the effort. The Commission will issue an RFP for paid media services in mid-September, and these services will be procured through the State's Purchasing and Contracting Procedures.

The Commission approved funding for several additional programs recommended by the Vision 2010 Coalition that have demonstrated strong results in other areas of the country. These programs include:

**Toll-free Quit Line and Website.** Funded at \$1.15 million per year, these communication tools provide information on treatment options and offer follow-up support. Healthcare providers will be able to promote these services to their teenaged patients. Plans call for Prevention Partners, a nonprofit organization associated with UNC School of Public Health, to aid the Commission in designing the RFP and to provide technical support to the commercial vendor eventually selected to provide this service. In addition, Prevention Partners will work with various healthcare providers to help teens quit.

**N-O-T Program.** The Commission allocated \$200,000 per year for implementation of the Not-on-Tobacco program, a non-punitive cessation program for teenagers who

want to quit tobacco use. This program is implemented by the American Lung Association, whose services will be procured under a sole source contract, as prescribed by State Purchasing and Contracting Procedures.

**Pregnant Teens Program.** Funded at \$100,000 per year, this project will expand smoking cessation intervention through programs that encourage healthcare providers to incorporate brief smoking cessation messages into the routine healthcare visit of pregnant teenage women. This program will be administered through a memorandum of understanding with the Women's and Children's Health Section, NCDHHS.

**Tobacco Sales to Minors.** North Carolina law prohibits sale and distribution of tobacco products to persons under age 18. The Commission has allocated \$500,000 per year to help fund enforcement efforts by the NC Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, Division of Alcohol Law Enforcement. This expenditure will also preserve \$14 million from the Substance Abuse and Treatment Block Grant by enabling North Carolina to meet federal compliance goals. This program will be administered through a memorandum of understanding with the Substance Abuse Services Section, NCDHHS, which coordinates enforcement and education efforts in this area.

**Outcomes Analysis.** The Commission's enabling statute requires that all funded programs be evaluated to determine the extent to which their stated goals have been achieved. A budget of \$200,000 per year has been allocated for this purpose, and, in the fall of 2002, the Commission will issue an RFP to identify an organization to conduct this evaluation.