



**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND COMMISSION**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 1, 2002**

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**Commission Announces \$9 Million in Grants to Promote Safe
Medication Use by Seniors**

The Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission announces the availability of \$3 million annually, for three years, in grants for programs to counsel seniors on the safe and wise use of prescription drugs. "Educating seniors about appropriate drug use is a unique feature of our State's prescription drug benefit program," said Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue, who chairs the Commission. "This places North Carolina in the forefront of this important health issue, nationally." Enrollment for the drug benefit program is expected to begin in October 2002.

National studies have shown that nearly 17% of hospitalizations involving seniors are the result of adverse reactions to medications, costing tens of billions of dollars to the health care system. In North Carolina, a Durham-based program providing medication-counseling services to seniors reports nearly a 30% drop in hospitalizations and emergency room visits among its client base.

Under this initiative, new and existing community-based programs would be eligible to apply for grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000, annually. Subject to availability of funds, as well as satisfactory program evaluation, these grants will be for three calendar years, 2003-2005. In making these grants, the Commission will consider diversity of populations served, geographic representation, and increasing local capacity to respond to local health needs.

Funded programs will assist seniors in identifying drug utilization issues such as drug-to-drug interactions and duplicative therapies. Grantees will also help seniors and low-income individuals, irrespective of age, acquire free, low-cost or discounted medications. In addition, grantees may also provide education services to help seniors manage chronic diseases. Through its Office of Research, Demonstrations and Rural Health, NCDHHS will coordinate and train grant recipients and provide them with free software to access drug programs.

To obtain a copy of the Request For Proposals and Application Form, please contact the Commission directly, or visit the Commission's website at www.hwtfc.org to obtain these documents after August 12, 2002.

The Health and Wellness Trust Fund was established by the General Assembly to receive and allocate 25% of North Carolina's share of the multi-billion dollar national tobacco settlement agreement reached in 1999. The Commission is comprised of 18 individuals representing a wide background of health care experience throughout North Carolina.

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