

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 21, 2005**

NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund announces \$4.5 million available for grants to combat teen tobacco use in NC

(Raleigh, NC) – The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announces the availability of \$4.5 million annually in grant funding to enhance its efforts to prevent and reduce teen tobacco use around the state. Funding for HWTF's Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Initiative has increased from \$6.4 million to \$15 million annually since the initiative was started in 2002.

Starting today, HWTF will accept applications from eligible organizations who seek to do the following: prevent youth initiation of tobacco use; eliminate youth exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke; promote tobacco use cessation among youth; and eliminate health disparities among minority youth or other youth populations identified with tobacco-related health disparities.

"I am pleased to announce the availability of funding to North Carolina organizations committed to saving our young people from the perils of tobacco use," said Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, HWTF chair, "It's imperative that we work together to ensure that tobacco products don't stand in the way of the lives and the futures of our young people."

Tobacco use has been identified as the number one preventable cause of premature death and disease in the country. In North Carolina alone, 65 percent of high school students and 37 percent of middle school students say they have used a tobacco product.

Grant proposals will be accepted from existing HWTF teen tobacco use grantees as well as organizations not currently receiving HWTF funding. Organizations are eligible to receive an HWTF grant if they fit into any of the following categories:

- *A state agency*
- *A local government or other political subdivision of the state, or a combination of such entities*
- *A nonprofit organization which has a significant purpose promoting the public's health, limiting youth access to tobacco products, or reducing the health consequences of tobacco use*

Interested applicants can obtain a copy of the Request for Proposal and submit an online application by visiting HWTF's Web site at www.hwtfc.org. **Applications will be accepted until March 29, 2005 at 5:00 p.m.**

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$127 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program. For more information, please visit www.hwtfc.org.

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