



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Health Department makes funding available for tobacco prevention and control projects

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Funding is available for local youth service organizations to conduct activities that protect youth from the dangers of tobacco use, the Alabama Department of Public Health announces. Funding from the Tobacco Settlement Agreement is providing approximately \$325,000 for 11 to 15 grants statewide.

"The focus for this three-year funding cycle is to educate the public, especially policy makers, on the dangers of tobacco exposure and the availability of tobacco products to under-aged youth," said Diane Beeson, director of the Tobacco Prevention and Control Division.

Although youth tobacco use has declined by 6 percent according the 2004 Alabama Youth Tobacco Survey, the number of middle and high school students who are current smokers and want to quit has decreased by approximately 10 percent.

"Smoking and tobacco use are not the norm in our culture no matter how much money is spent to create the image otherwise. The countermeasure is to change the social

norm by educating policy makers of what other communities have done to protect youth from tobacco exposure and under-aged availability," Beeson says.

Some cities, such as Selma and Jacksonville, are addressing tobacco smoke exposure with increasing measures to include restaurants and areas where youth play and work. Other cities have yet to address smoking and tobacco use in public facilities and workplaces.

Decreasing youth access to tobacco products began in 1997 in the city of Hoover by a group of committed students who supported a ban on vending machines. This effort spread across Shelby County to other cities and by 2001 12 other cities had passed a similar ban.

"However, there is much more to be done across Alabama and this funding opportunity will help those communities which are concerned about youth tobacco exposure and availability," Beeson said.

For more information about this funding opportunity and to obtain a request for funding application contact Barry J. Riddle at (334) 206-5604 or by e-mail (briddle@adph.state.al.us) before Jan. 28, 2005.

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