



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 young people from the dangers of tobacco use, the Alabama Department of Public Health announces. Funding from the national Tobacco Settlement Agreement is providing approximately \$325,000 for 11 grants statewide.

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

Youth tobacco use has declined by 6 percent, according to the 2004 Alabama Youth Tobacco Survey. However, the number of middle and high school students who are current smokers and want to quit did not improve. The number of students wanting to quit grew worse 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 regarding what other communities have done to protect youth from tobacco exposure and underaged availability," Ms. Beeson says.

Approximately 15 cities, large and small, passed smoke-free ordinances in 2005. Although the protection from exposure to secondhand smoke varies in these cities, they are addressing tobacco smoke exposure with stronger measures to include restaurants and areas where youth play and work. There are other cities, however, which have yet to address smoking 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.

In 2005, Cullman passed the first ordinance to require all tobacco products be placed behind the counter, to ban free sampling of tobacco products on public property, and to restrict vending machines with tobacco in places where underaged youth are allowed.

"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. 27, 2006.

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