



Tobacco Settlement  
Revenue –  
Investments in Youth

# YOUTH SMOKING PREVENTION PROMISING PRACTICE PROFILES

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## ***North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund***

### **SUMMARY**

North Carolina's Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) was created in 2001, to advocate for the health needs for poor and underserved groups in the state, and has focused much of its efforts on preventive health strategies for youth. The HWTF dedicates a significant portion of its tobacco settlement revenues to funding a wide variety of smoking cessation and prevention programming for youth, with a key goal of reducing teen smoking in its schools. By focusing their efforts on schools and using evaluation results to measure program effectiveness and refine its programs, HWTF has been able to reduce teen smoking among high school students by 30% and by 52% among middle school students. HWTF's efforts have also lead to the implementation of smoke-free policies in nearly all of the school districts in North Carolina.

For youth programs to be successful, policymakers, program leaders and intermediary organizations need access to flexible and sustainable sources of funding. State payments from the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) currently fund a range of health, education, prevention, and other initiatives serving young people. This series of promising practice profiles focuses on the use of MSA funds to support smoking prevention programs and services for youth.

### **BACKGROUND**

As a result of legislation passed in 1999, North Carolina's tobacco settlement funds are allocated to three trust funds:

- The Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF), which receives 25 percent of the funds to address the preventive health needs of vulnerable and underserved populations in the state.
- The Golden Leaf Foundation, which receives 50 percent of the funds to provide financial assistance to tobacco-growing communities.
- The Tobacco Trust Fund, which receives 25 percent of the funds to provide direct financial assistance to tobacco farmers and other tobacco-related businesses.

Through the HWTF, North Carolina dedicates approximately \$17 million of its tobacco settlement revenues each year to tobacco cessation and prevention efforts, or about 12 percent of its total

settlement revenues. The HWTF is supported exclusively from tobacco settlement funds from the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), and has experienced several years where funds have been diverted to other causes, most notably to state budget shortfalls.

## IMPLEMENTATION

HWTF supports smoking prevention and cessation programming in middle schools, high schools, and other recreational areas attended by youth. HWTF has recently moved to provide support services in college campuses as well. The initial programming developed by the HWTF was developed to address teen smoking in schools and was, in fact, the very first effort of its kind in the state. Within HWTF, the key programs that support tobacco prevention and control are:

- **TRU (Tobacco, Reality, Unfiltered) Campaign** – A mass media campaign, including print and television, aimed at preventing tobacco use in youth ages 11-17, TRU recruits North Carolina teens to act as spokespersons for the effort.
- **Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation** – Grant funding is provided to approximately 50 organizations, including schools, local health departments, and community based organizations to promote smoke-free policies in their schools and communities. HWTF staff also provide ongoing training and technical assistance to grantees. Grantees are required by HWTF to follow best practice guidelines developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **100% Tobacco Free Schools** – This advocacy effort is aimed at promoting the adoption and implementation of 100% smoke-free policies by all school districts. To date, the HWTF has successfully converted nearly all schools in the state to adopt 100% percent smoke free policies.
- **Tobacco-Free Colleges program** – HWTF provides funding to promote the adoption of tobacco-free campus policies across North Carolina colleges and universities.
- **Tobacco Cessation Quitline** – Implemented in collaboration with North Carolina Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch, the statewide Quitline 1-800-QUIT-NOW offers coaching to help individuals to quit smoking. HWTF pays for services to callers under the ages of 24, as well as for their caregivers and teachers.

## EVALUATION

HWTF contracts with the University of North Carolina, School of Medicine to provide an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of its tobacco prevention and cessation programs. In addition, HWTF utilizes information from the biannual Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS) in its decision-making process for determining grant and program funding allocations. The survey is administered by the NC Department of Health and Human Services Tobacco in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Key outcomes from the independent evaluation and the Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS) include:

- From 1999 to 2003, North Carolina experienced modest improvements in current youth cigarette smoking rates. However, from 2003 to 2007, the time period when HWTF funded its youth prevention and cessation initiative, significant changes in current cigarette smoking occurred among both middle and high school students. High school rates dropped from 27.3% in 2003 to 19% in 2007, and middle school from 9.3% in 2003 to 4.5% in 2007. This data translates into 34,000 fewer teen smokers since 2003.
- Nearly all (109 out of 115) of North Carolina's school districts are now 100 percent smoke free. Prior to the work of the HWTF, only 14 school districts had adopted this policy. Peer influence may be promoting a healthier direction since social norms around smoking

have definitely shifted among youth: 78.9% of middle school students and 51.1% of high school students have never tried smoking. This represents a dramatic change from 1999, when only 60.7% of middle school students and 31.8% of high school students had never tried smoking.

- According to the North Carolina Center for Health Statistics, 60 percent of parents of students surveyed indicated they had seen or heard of the TRU campaign, and 85 percent said that they strongly supported making schools smoke free.
- Grantees reported 257 new smoke free policies implemented in areas frequented by youth including restaurants, recreational and community centers, and churches.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

- ✓ **Community Involvement** – North Carolina's efforts were spearheaded, in part, from groups such as the Vision 2010 Coalition, which helped garner broad public support for the effort and put pressure on state leaders to support smoking prevention and cessation programming in a tobacco-producing state.
- ✓ **Program Evaluation Driving Future Design**– HWTF uses the University of North Carolina Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (UNC-TPEP) to evaluate its initiatives. Program results help shape the array of services and future strategies that are funded in order to ensure the limited funding is being spent optimally.
- ✓ **Targeting Scarce Resources** – HWTF has decided that it can have the largest impact with the limited resources available by focusing on youth and young adult smoking prevention and cessation services. The results, including making nearly all of the school districts in the state smoke free and the dramatic reduction in youth smoking rates speak to the focused efforts of the initiative. HWTF is recently moving into the college campus arena, in hopes of replicating their work of making smoke free campuses with older youth and young adults.

## RESOURCES

- Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, <http://www.cdc.gov>
- North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund, [www.healthwellnc.com](http://www.healthwellnc.com)
- North Carolina School of Medicine- Independent Outcomes Evaluation for Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Initiative, [http://www.healthwellnc.com/hwtfc/htmlfiles/fundprty\\_teentob-OutcomesAnalysis.htm](http://www.healthwellnc.com/hwtfc/htmlfiles/fundprty_teentob-OutcomesAnalysis.htm)
- North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/>
- North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey, <http://www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov/data/yts/index.htm>
- The Finance Project's Tobacco Settlement Revenue - Investments in Youth Initiative, <http://www.financeproject.org/tobacco>
- Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, Available online at: [http://www.naag.org/backpages/naag/tobacco/msa/msa-pdf/1109185724\\_1032468605\\_cigmsa.pdf](http://www.naag.org/backpages/naag/tobacco/msa/msa-pdf/1109185724_1032468605_cigmsa.pdf)
- University of North Carolina Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (TPEP), <http://www.tpep.unc.edu/>

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This Profile is part of a series of resources developed by The Finance Project intended to provide key state decision makers and opinion leaders with the information and tools necessary to consider how tobacco Master Settlement Agreement revenues can support initiatives that promote positive youth development, including the prevention of smoking and the adoption of healthy behaviors. The Finance Project has not conducted program evaluations of the initiatives profiled and does not endorse particular policies, practices, or programs. This Profile was developed under a grant from Underage Tobacco Prevention: Philip Morris USA, an Altria Company. For more information, visit [www.financeproject.org/tobacco](http://www.financeproject.org/tobacco) or email [tobacco@financeproject.org](mailto:tobacco@financeproject.org).