

UNC evaluation: N.C. tobacco prevention programs are saving lives and money

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The UNC-led evaluation concluded that fewer youths are taking up smoking, more public places have become smoke-free and more adults that smoke are quitting, thanks to tobacco prevention programs funded by the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

Tobacco prevention programs funded by the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund continue to pay dividends — fewer youth continue to take up smoking, more public places have become smoke-free and more adults that smoke are quitting.

That's the conclusion of the 2010 annual independent evaluation of the programs conducted by researchers at the University of North Carolina Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (TPEP).

“Tobacco prevention programs are a key part of our state’s arsenal against fighting cancer — the leading cause of death in North Carolina — and reducing health care costs,” said Adam Goldstein, MD, MPH, director of TPEP. “For every \$1 North Carolina spends on tobacco use prevention, the state probably saves at least \$10 in lower long-term medical costs.”

TPEP provides independent outcomes evaluation of the HWTF Tobacco Initiatives. The new evaluation report documents substantial accomplishments in fiscal year 2009-10 from the Tobacco Initiatives and makes recommendations to address current program challenges and future opportunities.

Key findings of the evaluation include:

- Health and Wellness Trust Fund programs are in part responsible for preventing more than 53,000 youths from starting to smoke since 2003.
- Last year, HWTF helped support over 8,000 North Carolinians choosing to free themselves from nicotine addiction through QuitlineNC, a free telephone cessation service.
- HWTF programs have made North Carolina a national leader in helping college campuses voluntarily adopt clean air policies. More than 175,000 North Carolina college students are now protected from harmful secondhand smoke on campuses.
- More than 2,300 youth participate annually in programs to prevent smoking, including 218 youth groups across NC
- Youths have helped 844 businesses and restaurants choose to be smoke-free since the inception of the Teen Initiative in 2003.

“Cancer and tobacco-related diseases hurt countless North Carolina families and add costs to our overburdened health care system,” said Dr. Laura Gerald, executive director of the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund. “Our programs are an investment in a stronger, healthier, and more productive North Carolina.”

TPEP’s evaluation noted that challenges remain: without continued funding, North Carolina is likely to see a rise in youth smoking. Researchers at the UNC School of Medicine suggest expanding the HWTF program mission to include adult populations at highest risk of tobacco-related diseases. Researchers also recommend expanding clean air legislation to protect all workers, a tobacco tax stamp to reduce cigarette smuggling, and higher [tobacco](#) excise measures proven to

further reduce consumption.

More information: A copy of the 2009-10 report is available at www.tpep.unc.edu/

Provided by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of
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