

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IN4Kids: NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund joins state's four medical schools to combat childhood obesity

RALEIGH, NC – The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) is launching a clinical intervention to prevent childhood obesity called “IN4Kids” that includes the state’s four medical schools and primary care practices. In recent years, a number of promising interventions to address obesity have been launched in North Carolina public schools and at the community level, but IN4Kids represents HWTF’s first such intervention through the health care system.

The latest data shows childhood obesity rates have reached epidemic levels in North Carolina, affecting nearly 25 percent of children ages five to eleven. Large medical centers have pediatric obesity treatment programs, but community-based practices have had very limited access to tools or methods for preventing and treating childhood obesity in North Carolina. IN4Kids fills this critical gap in addressing childhood obesity by developing new strategies to prevent and treat childhood obesity in these health care settings.

The program integrates registered dietitians into primary care practices, and will be piloted in practices affiliated with the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, Duke University School of Medicine, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine and Wake Forest University School of Medicine. Registered dietitians at the pilot sites will provide individualized assistance to youth, ages two to eighteen, who are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

“North Carolina has one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the country,” said Vandana Shah, HWTF executive director. “With IN4Kids, we have assembled a top-notch team of health care advocates, medical professionals and representatives from each of North Carolina’s medical schools who are working together to find new ways to combat this health crisis.”

In May 2008, the HWTF Commission voted to award \$1.4 million for the IN4Kids initiative starting July 2008 through December 2010. IN4Kids will assess whether integrating nutritionists into community clinics helps reduce obesity among children and whether it is financially viable for clinics to sustain in the long term through reimbursement from Medicaid or other private payors.

HWTF has contracted with the Duke Division of Community Health, in the Department of Community and Family Medicine, to lead IN4Kids’ management and research.

“We look forward to collaborating with the state’s medical schools and community clinics to address this critical issue,” said Dr. Lloyd Michener, Chair of the Duke Department of Community and Family Medicine. “We are in a position to make a substantial impact on how obesity prevention and treatment are delivered and paid for in community-based settings, which is expected not only to benefit the childhood health of thousands of our state’s residents, but also to have a lasting impact their health well into adulthood.”

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An advisory panel, comprised of health care professionals from the four medical schools and the NC Division of Public Health, will provide guidance on the study's design and interpretation.

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 \$199 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

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