

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund to Aid Low-Income North Carolinians in Accessing Dental Care

Raleigh, NC – The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announces the availability of \$2 million in grant funding over three years to increase access to oral health care for low-income, high-need populations.

Low-income North Carolinians face significant challenges accessing dental care, especially if they live in rural areas. In 2006, roughly 32% of North Carolina adults reported not visiting a dentist within the last year. Among minorities, the number who reported visiting a dentist within the past year was even lower (39% of Native Americans; 42% of African Americans; and 56% of Hispanics—22% reported that it had been at least five years since their last dental visit). Meeting the oral health needs of young children, older adults, people with disabilities, and other special populations is even more challenging. In 2007, nearly half (43%) of NC children ages 1-5 already had tooth decay, and 20% of children entering kindergarten had untreated tooth decay.

“Too many North Carolinians have trouble accessing urgently needed oral health care,” said Lt. Governor Bev Perdue, HWTF Commission Chair. “Oral health is an integral part of our overall well-being, and HWTF funding will help more of our state’s residents get the dental care they need and, in turn, prevent more painful and costly health problems.”

Applicants may apply under two funding categories: (1) expanding access to oral health care services for low-income, high-need populations and (2) developing workforce training opportunities for special populations.

Organizations eligible to receive a grant will fit into any of the following categories:

- A state agency
- A local government or other political subdivision of the state, or a combination of such entities
- A nonprofit organization which has a significant purpose promoting the public’s health

Grant proposals will be accepted from existing HWTF grantees as well as other NC organizations not currently receiving HWTF funding. Interested applicants can obtain a copy of the Request for Proposal and other application materials by visiting HWTF’s Web site at www.healthwellnc.com. **Final applications must be received by February 16, 2009.**

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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