



News Release

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UNC program offers statewide help with secondhand smoke campaigns

CHAPEL HILL -- To inform North Carolinians about the health hazards of secondhand smoke and motivate them to protect their families and communities, the Environmental Tobacco Smoke Training, Education and Research Program (EnTER) at the UNC School of Medicine has released a media campaign for use across the state.

Program staff have named the campaign "What Are You Breathing?" Health professionals and tobacco prevention groups can use the campaign to promote educational messages on secondhand smoke on billboards and in newspapers, flyers and church bulletins and at restaurants, bowling alleys and other sites.

Their goal is cleaner air and healthier people, said Melanie Miller, associate program coordinator at EnTER.

"Secondhand smoke is responsible for as many as 1,200 deaths in North Carolina every year from heart disease and lung cancer, in addition to causing many other illnesses," Miller said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that anyone with heart disease or risk factors for heart disease such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol should avoid exposure to secondhand smoke, even for short periods, in enclosed areas, she said.

"One thing we know is that too many North Carolinians are unaware of the serious health problems associated with breathing others' tobacco smoke," said Ann Houston, director of public education for the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services' Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch. "This media campaign, which is free for health groups to use in their communities, should help close that knowledge gap."

Groups across the state plan to integrate the campaign into their tobacco education and cessation programs, Miller said. The N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund supports 70 programs around the state through its Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Initiative.

"This effort also includes a statewide anti-smoking campaign known as "Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered.," Miller said. "'TRU' is designed to teach young people about the dangers of tobacco. Many grantees will use the money to help educate people about how reducing exposure to secondhand smoke reduces the number of youth who begin smoking and makes it easier for smokers to quit."

Secondhand smoke media campaign materials are available online at www.fammed.unc.edu/enter/media.htm. For more information, contact the EnTER Program at 919-966-5083 or enter@med.unc.edu.

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