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HHS TO AWARD HEALTHY COMMUNITY GRANTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL PROGRAMS TO PREVENT DIABETES, ASTHMA AND OBESITY

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson today encouraged states, cities and other local government agencies to propose innovative, community-based programs to prevent diabetes, asthma and obesity as part of a new grants program. The grants will be awarded to support local projects that will demonstrate approaches to reduce the prevalence and impact of the three common chronic health conditions in local communities.

The grants are being made available as part of the department's \$15 million *Steps to a HealthierUS* initiative, which advances President Bush's *HealthierUS* goal of helping Americans live better, longer, and healthier lives. The President's fiscal year 2004 budget proposal would substantially increase the investment in this initiative to a total of \$125 million, \$110 million more than the amount appropriated by Congress in the current fiscal year.

"To truly change our attitudes to focus on preventing chronic diseases rather than simply treating them, we need to reach Americans in their homes and neighborhoods with innovative programs that prevent diabetes and obesity and improve asthma management," Secretary Thompson said. "We've all got to think outside the box. The communities awarded the grants will help lead the country in changing our healthcare model from one that only treats the sick to one that successfully promotes better health."

The competitively awarded grants will fund more than a dozen demonstration projects in communities across the country. Local health departments, state health departments and tribal governments are eligible to apply for the grants.

Under the grants program, HHS will award about \$13.7 million to communities with the strongest proposals to enhance access to health services, encourage preventive behaviors and improve the overall health of the community by targeting those populations with the greatest needs. Communities selected for grant awards will use federal resources to build partnerships between public and private organizations working in the areas of prevention, medical, social, educational, business, religious and civic services.

Diabetes, asthma and obesity were chosen as targets not only because of their debilitating effects and their rapidly increasing prevalence in the United States but also because of their responsiveness to prevention measures. The number of people with diabetes in the United States has nearly doubled in the past decade to 17 million. An estimated 10 million adults and 5 million children suffer from asthma, and the number of cases of obesity in the United States has increased more than 50 percent over the past two decades.

HHS today published a Request for Applications for the new program in *Federal Register*. Applications must be submitted by July 15.

The request for applications and other information about the initiative is available at <http://www.healthierUS.gov>. In addition, HHS will host an interactive satellite broadcast to explain the *Steps to a HealthierUS* initiative to potential applicants and provide assistance to help them develop proposals. More information about this program is available at www.phppo.cdc.gov/phtn/RFA.

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Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at www.hhs.gov/news