

FIRSTHEALTH COMMUNITY VOICES FACT SHEET



Increasing the Cost of Cigarettes A Barrier to Start, a Motivator to Quit



DEFINING THE ISSUE – NORTH CAROLINA TOBACCO STATISTICS

Tobacco products cause a wide range of health problems, including heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, emphysema and asthma. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), tobacco-related health care expenses cost North Carolina \$1.9 billion per year, including more than \$600 million in Medicaid costs. North Carolina counties spent \$30 million in 2003 on smoking-related costs for Medicaid patients.

Almost 25 percent of North Carolinians smoke tobacco products regularly. Every day, 3,000 teens start smoking in the United States – which translates to 24,000 North Carolina children per year. Thirty-four percent of North Carolina’s high school students use tobacco products; 27.3 percent smoke cigarettes. Of those students, half of those who continue to smoke will die prematurely of tobacco-related illness.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Numerous studies by the CDC and other professional health organizations have shown that there is a significant decrease in smoking overall and an even larger percentage decrease in youth smoking for every 10 percent increase in the price of cigarettes. One of the most effective ways to prevent and reduce tobacco use by youth is to substantially raise the cost of cigarettes.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF RAISING THE COST OF TOBACCO

Increase the cost by	Reduce Youth Smoking	Fewer Adult Smokers	Fewer Future Youth Smokers	Prevent Premature Deaths	Fewer Smoking Harmed Births	Save In Long-term Health Care Costs
45-cents	9.4 percent	33,900	60,900	28,300	1,580	\$282.2 million
70-cents	16.1 percent	70,000	105,750	47,700	2,630	\$1.15 billion

IN SUMMARY

North Carolina is not the first state to face the issue of raising the cost of tobacco products. In the past two years, 37 other states have raised the costs of cigarettes. All other tobacco-producing states in the Southeast have either already raised the cost of cigarettes or are seeking to do so in 2005. Evidence-based research supports the fact that increasing the cost of cigarettes can be a barrier to youth smoking and a motivator for smokers to quit.