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November 30, 1998

Susan Baker, PhD
c/o Harris County Hospital District
and Baylor College of Medicine
One Baylor Plaza
Houston, Texas 77030

Dear Dr. Baker:

Attached is a proposal for consideration by the Harris County Hospital District (HCHD) which addresses the need for improved tobacco use prevention education among Houston-area children.

As you know, during the past decade, DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) and Dr. Alan Blum have been instrumental in bringing new and refreshing approaches to dealing with the problems associated with tobacco use in Houston and in Texas. Our work has involved a community-based model by engaging health professionals to become more active in schools and in the community-at-large. Our success can be measured in the increasing awareness we bring to the community regarding the leading preventable cause of death and disease, and the continued requests we receive for our educational model by area schools.

Such success in bringing together health professionals with teachers, parents, and students has been limited only in resources, and we are hopeful that HCHD will continue to support our efforts on a larger scale.

If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact me at (713) 906-0062.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Solberg, M.A.
Executive Director

Project Overview, Needs and Significance

The onset of tobacco use occurs primarily in early adolescence, a developmental stage that is several decades removed from the death and disability that are associated with smoking and spitting tobacco use in adulthood. According to the 1994 Report of the U.S. Surgeon General, Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People, more than 87% of tobacco use initiation occurs before the age of 21. The earlier young people begin using tobacco products, the more likely they are to continue to use as adults. In the State of Texas, the average age for tobacco initiation is 13 years of age, or approximately the time when adolescents enter middle school (grades 6 through 8). Preventing smoking and spitting tobacco use among young people is critical to ending the epidemic of tobacco use in Texas and the United States.

Young people face enormous pressure to use tobacco products. The tobacco industry devotes an annual budget of more than \$5 billion to advertising and promoting cigarettes and spitting tobacco products, and there has been a continuing shift from advertising to promotion, largely because of banning cigarette and spitting tobacco ads from broadcast media. However, the effect of these bans is dubious, largely because the use of promotional materials, the sponsoring of sports and cultural events, and the use of tobacco logos in nontraditional venues are more effective in reaching target audiences. For example, Houston, Texas is the host to more than 50 tobacco-sponsored events annually, from international motorsports events to Cinco de Mayo celebrations. The recent tobacco settlement in Texas, which bans the advertising of tobacco products on billboards, does nothing to curtail tobacco companies' brand-name sponsorship of community, sports, and other family-oriented events.

A misguided debate has arisen about whether tobacco promotion "causes" young people to smoke—misguided because single-source causation is too simple an explanation for any social phenomenon. More importantly is to understand the effect that tobacco advertising and promotion have: 1) create the perception that more people use tobacco products than actually do; and 2) provide a conduit between actual self-image and ideal self-image—in other words, tobacco use is made to look macho, successful, and athletic. Whether causal or not, cigarette advertising and promotion fosters the uptake of smoking in an environment with no campaign to counteract these effects.

Conventional school-based tobacco use prevention programs rely primarily on cognitive approaches, specifically the teaching of facts, numbers, prevalence, and incidence which are merely committed to memory. Such efforts aim to prevent adolescent-onset tobacco use by imparting information about the harmful effects of smoking. In order to fill the gap left by traditional health education programs, a new approach is needed that will foster new attitudes among Houston-area young people and their families, thus changing community norms with respect to tobacco use and its promotion.

In 1977, DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) was founded with the following mission: to educate the public, especially young people, in refreshing ways about the major preventable causes of poor health and high medical costs. DOC set out to accomplish this mission by tapping the highest possible level of commitment from every young person in turning the tables on the promotion of unhealthy products. Through a multi-layered approach involving the clinic, classroom, and community-at-large, DOC pioneered the use of humor, satire, and ridicule in counteracting tobacco use and its promotion.

This project, implemented by DOC with assistance under subcontract with Baylor College of Medicine, Department of Family and Community Medicine, will bring a fresh, new approach to counteracting tobacco use and promotion by focusing on Houston-area middle school students and their families.

Aims and Objectives

Although this project is similarly concerned with increasing knowledge and influencing behavior, its primary focus is on changing attitudes, which are the cornerstones of behavior. By perceiving the subject of tobacco use and its promotion in a different light, young people, and those they interact with, will become more involved in counteracting the problem.

This project aims to impart cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral objectives set forth by health professionals (in collaboration with school personnel and other community leaders) to encourage young people themselves to become active in counteracting tobacco use and promotion. Through the implementation of humorous, image-based strategies, the project aims to provide adolescents with the understanding of how promoters of tobacco may influence them, encouraging young people to make fun of the advertising instead of merely condemning it. This philosophy is based on principles in advertising—that in the real world, people do not purchase cartons of "nicotine," or "tobacco;" rather, they buy brand-name products, such as Marlboro, Camel, Newport, and Virginia Slims. These products are seldom specifically scrutinized in traditional health education programs, even though they and their logos and mascots are recognized instantly by children. The project will attempt to change community norms and the social environment regarding tobacco use and promotion by making the connection between the ubiquitous nature of tobacco promotions in Houston and the many problems facing the community that can be attributed to tobacco use.

Through the use of image-based health education, which encourages the use of humor and satire in counteracting tobacco use and promotion, this project will: 1) enhance the interest and involvement of participating schools, clinics, community centers, and young people in the subject of tobacco use and promotion (attitudinal objective); 2) improve the acquisition and retention of knowledge by participants regarding the adverse health effects of tobacco use and promotion (cognitive objective); and 3) increase the use of humor and other engaging strategies throughout the Houston area in curtailing tobacco use and its promotion (behavioral objective).

Methodology

The project will be conducted over a ten-month period, beginning January 1, 1999. Physicians, nurses, medical students, residents, and other health professionals will receive training for making presentations to Houston-area middle schools. In order to recruit and train health professionals from throughout the Houston-area, training sessions, led by Dr. Alan Blum, will be held at Baylor College of Medicine (with invitations to UT School of Medicine), and the community health centers of Casa de Amigos, Martin Luther King, and Northwest Community Health Center. Health professionals that participate in the training will receive image-based health education materials, including a video and slide-presentation, that will be used when making school-based presentations (these materials have already been developed and need only be reproduced).

A total of 41 Houston-area middle schools will be invited to participate in the project. Letters of invitation/project explanation and a brief questionnaire will be sent to middle schools in the following school districts¹: Houston Independent School District, North Forest Independent School District, and Spring Branch Independent School District. Schools that will receive presentations as part of the project will be chosen based on their early response to the questionnaire. An emphasis will be placed on schools that are located within one of the community health center service areas.

The questionnaire will ask schools to: 1) identify at least two school contacts; 2) briefly describe any current or previous tobacco prevention or educational efforts; 3) describe relevant school policies with respect to tobacco use on campus and during school functions; 4) identify student resources (either on or off campus) designed to assist students with substance abuse problems; 5) explain how their school will continue to focus on tobacco prevention after receiving free training, presentations, and educational materials.

Questionnaires will be reviewed by project staff and schools will be notified of their participation. Project staff will work with school contacts to schedule a training session for each school to be held on the school campus. School contacts will notify students, faculty, school health nurses, school administrators and parents. Project staff will assist school contacts in this effort by providing draft letters including an explanation of the project and an invitation to participate in the training.

School training sessions will be led by Dr. Blum, accompanied by project staff and at least one health professional who participated in the earlier training. The school training sessions will include an overview of the project and problems associated with tobacco use and promotion, provide examples of tobacco advertising and promotion in the community, and provide suggestions for working with young people to counteract tobacco use and its promotion. As part of the training, schools will receive educational materials. The school training also provides the

¹ These school districts were selected based on positive working relationships with each district. In working on previous projects, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) has been supportive of school-based efforts initiated by DOC. Such efforts have established a positive working relationship with the HISD Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) program (see previous letter of support). DOC has also established an ongoing working relationship with North Forest Independent School District, and continues to serve as a resource for school-based substance abuse prevention efforts. The school districts were also selected because many of the students attending these schools, and their families, are included in the service area for the community health centers to be included as training centers in the project.

opportunity for school personnel to see first-hand the information that students will receive in the presentation during a school assembly.

Project staff will work with school contacts to set a date for a school presentation. The school presentations will be led by Dr. Blum, accompanied by project staff and at least one participating health care professional. Upon completion of the school presentation, students, faculty, and other school personnel will be asked to sign up for further efforts and to help design an action plan for their school. A trained health care professional will serve as the primary follow-up person and will in effect "adopt" that school as his or her own project. The health care professional will assist the school team in brainstorming and developing an action plan for counteracting tobacco use and its promotion at the campus level, but including community involvement. Schools will be asked to share a brief description of their action plans with project staff, and project staff will continue to serve as a resource center for each school.

Outcome Objectives

By February 19, 1999 at least 15 health professionals will be recruited and trained for participation in the project, and will represent a broad area of the Houston community as outlined in this project. All materials needed for the project will be developed and/or reproduced. A brochure explaining the project and letters of invitation will be sent to the middle schools in the selected school districts mentioned above. The school questionnaire will be included in this mailing, complete with a business reply envelope and due date for returning the questionnaire.

By March 12, 1999 at least 15 of the possible 41 middle schools from the three selected school districts will have been identified as participating in the project. Project staff will have assisted school contacts in planning a school training session, including setting a date, notifying students, faculty, other school personnel, and parents, and providing promotional and educational materials. By April 2, 1999 an additional 5 middle schools will be identified for inclusion in the project.

By April 30, 1999 training sessions and presentations will be completed for at least 15 schools, and health professionals will be identified for follow-up and assistance in developing action plans.

By May 28, 1999 at least 12 schools will have completed action plans for implementation in school-year 1999-2000.

June through October, 1999 project staff will provide assistance for schools implementing action plans, serve as a resource, and provide on-site assistance as needed.

Evaluation

The project will be evaluated based on: 1) participation of health care professionals completing training and "adopting" a school; 2) participation of middle schools in completing training and presentation component of project; 3) successful completion of action plan for schools; and 4) implementation of action plan for schools.

Tools used in the evaluation include the initial questionnaire completed by participating middle schools, action plans submitted by middle schools, and a completed evaluation form to be completed by school contacts. The evaluation will consider previous tobacco use prevention efforts, schools needs in tobacco use prevention and control, and future efforts to counteract tobacco use and its promotion.

BudgetPersonnel

Project Director Alan Blum, MD	(.40 FTE/6 mos.) (Subcontract with Baylor College of Medicine, Department of Family and Community Medicine)	\$26,000
Fringe @ Baylor Rate		\$5,280
Project Manager Eric Solberg, MA	(.20 FTE/10 mos.)	\$9,360
Project Assistant Melissa Marquez	(.75 FTE/10 mos.)	\$16,200
Fringe Benefits @ 21% of Direct Compensation		\$5,368

Project Expenses

Educational Materials: 35 slide sets, 35 videos reproduced	\$4,725
Supplies: letterhead, envelopes, etc.	\$300
Printing: project brochures, questionnaires, evaluation forms	\$600
Postage (including business reply)	\$260
Travel: mileage reimbursement for presentations/site visits	\$195

Professional Services

Accounting	<u>\$1,800</u>
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TOTAL **\$70,088**

DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) will serve as the fiscal agent for the project. DOC will subcontract with Baylor College of Medicine for time spent on the project by Alan Blum, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine. At the completion of the project, an external audit will be performed by the accounting firm of Zientek & Co.

Houston Independent School District

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— EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS SUPPORT IN HOUSTON-AREA SCHOOLS —

Alan Blum, M.D.
Assistant Professor
Baylor College of Medicine
Department of Family Medicine
5510 Greenbriar
Houston, TX 77005

Dear Dr. Blum:

I am writing to offer my support for your proposal entitled "Doctors Ought to Care: Super Health 2000 Youth Initiative." Educating young people about the major preventable causes of poor health and high medical costs is a welcome objective for HISD.

Bringing together representatives from the public and private sectors to establish an academic pathway to promote good health among Houston's youngsters in an important step toward a healthier generation. We look forward to working with you as you develop your final proposal.

Yours truly,

Juanita Walker
Director
Volunteers In Public Schools

JW:fc