

# Policy Briefs and Recommendations for Change: Improving Health and Quality of Life in the Forsyth County Community

Created by the Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition

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## Executive Summary

The Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition is beginning a process of identifying and advocating for policy and system level change to enhance the quality of life in our community. We seek to create an environment that makes healthy choices easier or even possible for all residents in Forsyth County.

In 2003, key issue areas were identified and groups of volunteers began addressing community health challenges. Each of these groups began to investigate the health issues, to strategize about possible system or policy changes that had the potential to improve the identified health challenges, and to look to other communities and states for examples of successful strategies. During the next two years, each group developed recommendations for specific, measurable system and policy changes for our community. The eight recommendations are presented here. In future years, new health issues will be selected and policy recommendations made.

In the coming months, the Healthy Community Coalition membership will focus on creating innovative ways to bring an ever broadening group of people together to work on these common goals. The Healthy Community Coalition is helping community residents focus on common concerns and celebrate common successes. Together, we can improve the quality of life in our community.

## Policy Recommendations

### Recommendation

### Health Behaviors

#### Nutrition on the Lunch line in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:

The Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition (FCHCC) recommends that:

All schools shall achieve the Superior level of nutrition standards in all categories as described in *Eat Smart: North Carolina's Recommended Standards for All Foods Available in School*.

This will mean that:

- Grades PreK-5 achieve the Superior level by no later than 2009.  
Note: Elementary schools do not have vending machines except in the Teacher's Lounge.
- Grades 6-8 achieve the Superior level by no later than 2011.
- Grades 9-12 achieve the Superior level by no later than 2014.

FCHCC and coalition partners will advocate with the local legislative delegation and County Commissioners for adequate school funding so our schools don't have to rely on revenue from beverage products to meet essential educational needs.

## **Recommendation**

## **Health Behaviors**

### **Exclusive Soft Drink Contracts in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools**

Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:

The Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition (FCHCC) recommends that:

WSFC Board of Education may enact policy whereby the district may only sign exclusive “Pouring Rights” contracts with beverage companies for beverages that meet the Superior level for A la carte Items and Beverage Vending as described in *Eat Smart: North Carolina’s Recommended Standards for All Foods Available in School*. This will mean that:

- Grades PreK-5 achieve the Superior level by no later than 2009.

Note: Elementary schools do not have vending machines except in the Teacher’s Lounge.

- Grades 6-8 achieve the Superior level by no later than 2011.
- Grades 9-12 achieve the Superior level by no later than 2014.

FCHCC and coalition partners will advocate with the local legislative delegation and County Commissioners for adequate school funding so our schools don’t have to rely on revenue from beverage products to meet essential educational needs.

## **Recommendation**

## **Health Behaviors**

### **100% Tobacco Free Schools**

Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:

Forsyth County Healthy Communities Coalition joins the 100% Tobacco Free Schools Task Force, Forsyth County Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition, the Forsyth County Board of Health, the Forsyth- Stokes- Davie County Medical Society and the Forsyth County School Health Advisory Council to recommend that Winston-Salem Forsyth County schools pass a 100% Tobacco Free Policy, prohibiting tobacco use by all students and staff, on all school grounds, at all times.

## **Recommendation**

## **Health Behaviors**

### **Active Living in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County-Opportunities and Challenges**

Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:

The Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition (FCHCC), the Behealthy Coalition and the Forsyth County Board of Health recommends that:

- The City-County Planning Board, the Winston-Salem City Council, and Forsyth County Board of Commissioners follow the planning concepts proposed in *The Legacy Comprehensive Plan* and seriously consider these planning concepts in their decision making processes and support the 150 action items identified in *The Legacy Plan*.
- The City-County Planning Board creates a public health advisory function (committee, board, etc.)

The FCHCC is joined by the Forsyth County Board of Health in requesting of the City-County Planning Board, Forsyth County Board of Commissioners, the Winston-Salem Mayor's Office, and the Winston-Salem City Council each participate in a effort to explore the feasibility of creating and sustaining such an entity.

The objectives of this exploratory process would include but not be limited to: determining whether there is consensus and political support to create such an entity; (and if so) defining membership and providing a mechanism to sustain membership; and defining a mechanism for the entity to have input into the planning process.

## **Recommendation**

## **Domestic Violence**

### **Policy Recommendations for Prevention, Intervention, and Response**

#### **Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:**

The Domestic Violence Community Council recommends the following actions:

- Integrate relationship violence education into the middle school health curriculum.
- Continue and expand current dating violence prevention and intervention programs in all Winston-Salem/Forsyth County high schools through LifeSkills classes.
- Increase affordable and available permanent and transitional housing in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.
- Expand Winston-Salem Transit Authority's bus routes and hours of operation.

## **Recommendation**

## **Racial Disparities**

### **Social Equity in the Community Planning Process**

#### **Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:**

The Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition (FCHCC) and the Board of Health recommends that:

The City-County Planning Board creates a public health advisory function (committee, board, etc.) The FCHCC is joined by the Forsyth County Board of Health in requesting of the City-County Planning Board, the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners, the Winston-Salem Mayor's Office, and the Winston-Salem City Council each participate in a effort to explore the feasibility of creating and sustaining such an entity.

The objectives of this exploratory process would include but not be limited to: determining whether there is consensus and political support to create such an entity; (and if so) defining membership and providing a mechanism to sustain membership; and defining a mechanism for the entity to have input into the planning process.

## **Recommendation**

## **Racial Disparities**

### **Raising Income to Improve Health**

#### **Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:**

The Forsyth County Health Community Coalition (FCHCC) recommends that:

- The Winston-Salem City Government and the Forsyth County Government pay their employees a living minimum wage; and that those governments require that any contractor they hire, and any business receiving tax abatements or other subsidies from those governments also pay a living minimum wage to their employees.
- The City of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County Governments should consider and evaluate labor and tax policies to increase income to minimum sustenance levels for the working poor as an explicit public health intervention. Conversely, costs and benefits to health should be explicitly considered in policy debates regarding the minimum wage.

The prevalence of low income be an explicit health status indicator and reducing the prevalence of low income become a community public health objective.

A living minimum wage be considered the amount a person would need to earn to stay above the federal poverty level. Currently, this amount is \$19,350 a year for a family of four, or \$9.30 per hour with health benefits, or \$12.00 without health benefits for a full-time, year round worker.

## **Recommendation**

## **Reproductive Health**

### **Preventing unplanned pregnancy:**

#### **Local health care providers can help women plan ahead and be prepared.**

#### **Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:**

The Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition joins with the Forsyth County Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition to recommend the following system change that will impact the standard practice of local health care providers. The recommendations address educating women and men about birth control and emergency birth control, encouraging sexually active female patients to use a reliable method of birth control, and equipping those women interested in emergency birth control with the necessary prescription for the medication.

Local health care providers who provide care for sexually active women should include the following items in their protocol for each annual visit:

- Educate and counsel patients about planning for pregnancy, birth control options and emergency birth control.
- Prepare patients for handling a birth control emergency. Educate and offer patients an advance prescription for emergency birth control that can be filled within one year. A patient can then have the medication on hand should they ever have an emergency arise.
- Inform patients that emergency contraception is available locally. Half of pharmacies in Forsyth County do carry emergency birth control pills in stock.