



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama receives second arthritis grant award

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alabama is one of eight states in the nation to be awarded funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement and evaluate a state-level program for arthritis in the second round of grants ever awarded by CDC to the states for arthritis. The first grant to Alabama was awarded in 1999.

The award of \$300,000 is intended to increase efforts to reduce the burden of arthritis by focusing on prevention of disability and improving the quality of life for persons with arthritis. Since arthritis is the No. 1 cause of disability for Americans, it is important to make programs easily available to help people with arthritis better manage it so they will feel better.

These include the following: The Arthritis Self-Help Course, which involves small group education with problem solving, exercise, relaxation and communication; promoting physical activity to individuals with arthritis using land-based exercise programs such as PACE (People with Arthritis Can Exercise) or water-based programs such as the Arthritis Foundation's Aquatics Program. In addition, the Alabama Department of Public Health will increase knowledge of ways for people to better manage their arthritis through radio and television announcements and printed materials.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Arthritis limits the ability of so many Alabamians in leading active lives. Since we have had funding from CDC, arthritis has been incorporated into chronic disease prevention, health promotion and other programs of the state and local health departments. Alabama has been recognized locally as well as nationally for its efforts in addressing the burden of arthritis."

According to the 2001 Alabama Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System:

- Approximately 1.4 million Alabamians or 40.5 percent of Alabama's adult population report that they have arthritis.
- Over 438,000 adults in Alabama with arthritis have limitations in their daily activities.
- Greater than 70 percent of Alabama adults over 65 years of age, or 424,000 persons, have arthritis.
- Over half of Alabamians ages 45 to 64 have arthritis.
- In Alabama, 46 percent of women and 34 percent of men have arthritis.
- An estimated 392,000 obese adults in Alabama have arthritis.

- An estimated 314,000 physically inactive adults in Alabama have arthritis.
- In Alabama, a greater prevalence of arthritis exists in groups with lower educational status.

Linda Austin, Alabama's arthritis program director, said, "Alabama has the third highest prevalence of arthritis in the nation. Two major factors in Alabama's high arthritis prevalence rate are obesity and a lack of leisure-time physical activities."

In addition, Alabama has a shortage of facilities and properly trained professionals in arthritis treatment, care, education and rehabilitation in many areas of the state.

"Maintaining an appropriate weight and avoiding occupational or sports-related injuries can help prevent arthritis," Ms. Austin said. "Early diagnosis and medical treatment can reduce disability once arthritis is diagnosed. Alabama's program will concentrate on encouraging participation in evidence-based, self-help programs and promotion of the CDC health communication campaign, 'Physical Activity. The Arthritis Pain Reliever.' We need to get to people before they get disabled and provide programs that will teach them to manage their disease."

Colleen Cotter, president of the Alabama Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation, commented, "We continue to be committed to doing all we can to reduce the burden of arthritis in our state. Additionally, we look forward to this opportunity to expand our evidence-based self-management programs."

Alabama will continue to expand partnerships through the Alabama Arthritis Prevention and Treatment Coalition, include surveillance activities involving the availability and delivery of evidence-based self-management programs, and coordinate activities statewide.

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