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From the Knox County Health Department

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Board of Health votes to lay off part-time health educators

The Knox County Board of Health voted unanimously to lay off two part-time health educators at a special meeting Wednesday due to a lack of funding. The lay-offs are effective July 2.

The lack of funding is due to cancellation of the tobacco prevention grant at the end of June and termination of abstinence education funding last fall. Cancellation of the tobacco grant meant a loss of \$112,000 for FY 2008-2009. The abstinence education grant which was terminated Sept. 30, 2007, meant an annual loss \$50,000 for the health department. The decrease in grant funding is part of a continuing trend that the department has experienced over the past three years as health education funding has dried up.

Loss of the tobacco prevention funding is due to recent actions by the state legislature to dissolve the Ohio Tobacco Prevention Foundation and shift \$230 million of its funding to a statewide jobs creation package. An additional \$40 million dollars from the foundation was directed toward the Ohio Department of Health for tobacco prevention efforts. However, currently all of the funds are tied up in court proceedings due to lawsuits filed to move the money to an out-of-state foundation whose mission is tobacco prevention.

Termination of the abstinence education funding was due to the state's decision not to accept Title V funding.

The employees affected by the layoffs were determined by the accumulation of retention points in accordance with procedures set forth by the Ohio Department of Administrative Services.

There was no other action taken at the meeting.