

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 7, 2002 (World Asthma Day)

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**LANDMARK CALIFORNIA HEALTH STUDY REPORTS THAT
ASTHMA IS A MAJOR ISSUE FOR CALIFORNIANS**
*New \$12 million statewide program to improve quality of life
for school-aged children with asthma*

May 7, 2002 (World Asthma Day) – Los Angeles, California – Today, The California Endowment, the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the California Department of Health Services held a joint press conference to announce the first findings from the 2001 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) about the prevalence and control of asthma among Californians. Concurrently, The California Endowment, a health foundation, launched a new \$12 million, three-year statewide program – ***Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA)*** – to improve the environments where children with asthma live, learn and play.

Based on key findings from the first California Health Interview Survey (CHIS 2001) released today, nearly 3 million Californians suffer from asthma symptoms. Approximately 667,000 of those Californians are school-aged children ages six to 17. Further, findings indicate that asthma disproportionately affects school-aged children and young adults, and that lifetime asthma prevalence is high among this same population compared to other age groups.

“The CHIS 2001 findings provide us with a clear picture that asthma is an enormous issue for Californians across the state, especially school-aged children,” said Robert K. Ross, M.D., President and CEO, The California Endowment. “Since asthma is a chronic illness that often begins in childhood, our first line of defense against this disease is to improve the quality of life for these children with asthma.”

In addition to examining the prevalence of asthma in California, CHIS 2001 also includes findings about the inadequate control of asthma throughout the state. The report states that 744,000 Californians experience asthma symptoms every day or every week,

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which could be a sign of inadequate medical management and/or persistent exposure to environmental triggers as well as a greater severity of the chronic disease.

“Now, for the first time, we have information on how the prevalence and control of asthma differs within California by geographic area, and across various racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups,” said E. Richard Brown, Ph.D., Director, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and Principal Investigator for the 2001 California Health Interview Survey. The CHIS 2001 findings enable us to provide accurate information on the severity of asthma in California to help guide medical and public health efforts to control asthma, including the important work of the Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA) being launched today.”

While there is no known cause or cure for asthma, research indicates that people with asthma have more frequent symptoms if they are exposed to environmental triggers that can cause an asthma attack such as second hand tobacco smoke, air pollutants (air and diesel exhaust fumes), chemicals, mold, cockroaches, dust mites, pollen, animal dander, and viral respiratory infections. Disabilities and the risk of death associated with asthma are largely preventable with proper medical attention and reductions in environmental triggers.

“Research clearly indicates that it is not enough to provide asthmatic children with *just* clinical management,” said Diana Bontá, Director, California Department of Health Services. “It’s just as vital that we inform educators, parents and caregivers about the environmental triggers that can cause an asthma attack. By doing this, the CAFA program addresses one of the most important steps in the fight against asthma.”

Through the CAFA program, The California Endowment has awarded 12 grants of \$450,000 each to organizations throughout the state to form or expand a coalition of local partnerships that bring together concerned parents, community leaders and organizations from the public, private and nonprofit sectors to reduce asthma triggers in places where children live, learn and play. Working with these stakeholders, each

partnership will assess the local impact of asthma, implement a project to reduce environmental triggers, develop and implement local outreach activities, and advance local policies to reduce asthma triggers. Additionally, regional coalitions will provide technical assistance and support to the local partnerships.

About the CAFA Program:

The CAFA program is the second phase in a series of programs created by The Endowment that focuses on improving the quality of life for school-aged children with asthma. The first phase included the launch of the California Asthma Among the School-Aged (CAASA) program, a three-year statewide program designed to improve the clinical management of care for school-aged children with asthma.

The 12 community-based partners who each will receive a \$450,000 grant from The Endowment include: Oakland/Berkeley Asthma Coalition for School-Aged Children (Alameda County); West County Asthma Task Force (Contra Costa County); Sonoma County Asthma Consortium (Sonoma County); San Francisco Asthma Task Force (San Francisco County); Solano Asthma Coalition (Solano County); Kern County Asthma Coalition (Kern County); Tulare County Asthma Coalition (Tulare Coalition), Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition (Merced/Mariposa Counties); Central/South Central Los Angeles Asthma Collaborative (Los Angeles County); Imperial Valley Asthma Partnership (Imperial County); San Diego Allies Against Asthma (San Diego County); and Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma (Los Angeles County).

About CHIS 2001:

The California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) is a collaborative effort of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the California Department of Health Services and the Public Health Institute. CHIS is the largest state health survey in the U.S. and is a telephone survey conducted every two years on public health topics and access to health care. Funding for CHIS 2001 was provided by The California Department of Health

Services, The California Endowment, the California Children and Families Commission, the National Cancer Institute, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Indian Health Service.

For more information about the CHIS and the availability of CHIS 2001 data and results, visit www.chis.ucla.edu.

About The California Endowment:

The California Endowment was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. The Endowment has regional offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno and San Diego with program staff working throughout the state. The Endowment makes grants to organizations and institutions that directly benefit the health and well-being of the people of California. For more information, visit their web site at www.calendow.org.

About the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research:

The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, established in 1994, is a leading source of health policy information for California and the nation. The Center's mission is to understand and advance public policies that can improve access to health care and the health status of the diverse population in California and the U.S. Key health policy areas at the local, state and national levels informed by the Center's work include – access to health care and insurance coverage, health promotion and disease prevention, management of chronic conditions and public programs and the finance and systems of health care. The Center's studies focus on the health needs of communities and

populations that are at risk for adverse health conditions or are underserved by the health system. The Center is the home of the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). For more information on the Center, visit www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu.

About the California Department of Health Services:

The mission of the California Department of Health Services (DHS) is to protect and improve the health of all Californians. With the support of dedicated and skilled employees and the application of public health sciences, the Department is committed to:

- Reducing the occurrence of preventable disease, disability, and premature death among all Californians.
- Closing the gaps in health status and access to care among the State's diverse population subgroups.
- Providing leadership and setting the standard in reforming health care into a coordinated, accountable, and affordable health care system which emphasizes access to appropriate preventive measures and high-quality services.
- Building and fostering strong partnerships for health with local health agencies, public and private agencies, community-based organizations, providers, consumers, educational and academic institutions, and other interested groups.
- Improving the quality and cultural competence of the Department's operations, services, and programs.

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