

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Lexington Health Department Awarded Grant to Work with Area Restaurants, Schools, on Toxics Use Reduction**

The Lexington Health Department has received a \$7,500 community grant for a project aimed at reducing the use of toxic chemicals in the food service industry. This unique project is one of six to be funded by the Toxics Use Reduction Institute at UMASS Lowell.

“The grant will facilitate training and enhance awareness among the workers who use and are exposed to toxic cleaners, pesticides, and other products in our restaurants and school cafeterias” noted Beverly Anderson, Health Director for the Town. Stephanie Scogland, Environmental Health Agent, who manages the Food Safety Program for the Board of Health, will help administer the new program.

The goal of Lexington’s project, titled “Food Services and Toxics Use Reduction- Making Food Preparation Safer,” is to work with more than 100 local food establishments, including public and private school cafeterias, to determine the type and levels of toxic chemical usage, and to raise awareness among key personnel about ways to reduce use and exposure.

The Health Department will develop literature and host a training program for food service managers. The Health Department will also collaborate with the local Chamber of Commerce and Office of Economic Development to engage local businesses. Information gathered through the project will be shared with Massachusetts health agents to promote widespread adoption of safer practices.

The Lexington Health Department received a similar grant from the Institute in 1998 to create a brochure and conduct outreach on reducing household hazardous waste at the Minuteman Household Hazardous Products Facility.

*The Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Program, known as TURA, was created by landmark legislation (Toxics Use Reduction Act) in 1989. TURA promotes safer and cleaner industrial processes that enhance the economic vitality of Massachusetts firms, while protecting the environment, workers and public health.*

*The Institute awards grants to community/environmental organizations and local governments to raise awareness and work on reducing toxic chemical use. Now in its seventh year, the Toxics Use Reduction Networking (TURN) Grants Program encourages citizen involvement in the State’s TUR Program, fosters collaborative action, and develops model projects for other communities to replicate. The six 2002 projects are among 51 projects funded to date that have addressed toxics in industrial facilities, commercial businesses, municipalities, schools and households.*

