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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 5, 2007

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Budget Supports People with Disabilities

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Governor Charlie Crist recently released his budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2007-08, allowing for people with developmental disabilities to continue to receive needed services through Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

The agency currently serves more than 35,000 Floridians with developmental disabilities. Of those citizens, 25,416 are currently enrolled in the Home and Community-Based Service Waiver. The waiver allows them to receive services to support living in their community rather than in an institution. The proposed budget includes \$119 million to cover the growing demand for waiver services through increased utilization from existing customers, and to provide waiver services to customers transitioning from the developmental services institutions.

Interim Agency Director Barney Ray said, "We thank Governor Crist for recognizing the escalating demand for services from our citizens with developmental disabilities and including funding in the budget to meet their needs. This agency's goal is to provide our customers with the services they need in order to be contributing members of their community, and Governor Crist's recommended budget will help us achieve this mission."

Money has also been earmarked to take care of citizens with developmental disabilities that find themselves in extreme need due to a caretaker or housing crisis. Over \$7 million will be used to care for 500 new crisis customers in the upcoming year and another \$6.7 million will pay for the crisis customers that will enter the program this year.

Also, the proposed budget will allow the agency to serve more people in its Mentally Retarded Defendant Program. The budget provides \$6.6 million for 32 more beds to house people who have been determined incompetent to stand trial due to their low IQ and by law must be placed in a secure facility.

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