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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 11 , 2008

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Budget Supports People with Disabilities

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Jim DeBeaugrine, Interim Director for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) today announced some highlights of the Fiscal Year 2008-09 budget signed today by Governor Charlie Crist. This austere budget will allow for people with developmental disabilities to continue to receive needed services through APD.

Some main points include:

- \$600,000 to establish dental clinics for people with developmental disabilities at the three Developmental Centers. Appropriate dental care for people with developmental disabilities is a major issue across the state. The clinics will be available to the public.
- Provides \$9.5 million to address the APD funding deficit.
- \$3.1 million to expedite conducting needs assessments for the 31,000 Medicaid waiver customers by June 30, 2009.

"I am thankful to Governor Crist for acknowledging the importance of the needs of Floridians with developmental disabilities by recommending funding for our agency's top priorities," Interim Director DeBeaugrine said. "In a tight budget year, we acknowledge the difficult financial situation the Legislature faced. Although we are concerned about the potential impact of the provider rate reductions, we are grateful that there were no direct service eliminations or reductions to the individuals we serve."

The budget reduces provider rates by \$43.5 million. In anticipation that some Medicaid waiver providers will decide not to continue to offer services, APD has enhanced its Web site---www.apdcares.org---to include options for individuals and families who may be affected. The agency is also providing an email link to APD employees who can assist with questions related to finding appropriate housing or supported living services. The site will be updated regularly.

The agency annually serves about 35,000 Floridians with developmental disabilities of mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and Prader-Willi syndrome. For more information on the agency, call **1-866-APD-CARES** or visit www.apd.myflorida.com.

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