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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BOARD ANNOUNCES NEW DISASTER AND EMERGENCY PLANNING PROJECT

(Madison, WI, March 24, 2009) – The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) announces the launch of a new statewide Disaster and Emergency Planning Project for people with disabilities.

“National, state and local emergency disaster plans have recognized the shift from institutional to independent living in their own homes for people with disabilities. In an emergency or disaster event, a disruption of their homes could put many people with disabilities in immediate danger of life threatening health problems and impact local emergency systems,” said John Donnelly, Chairperson of the Board.

Examples of public health emergencies or events are extended electrical power disruption, quarantine zones in the event of bioterrorism or chemical attack, or the need to evacuate due to tornados, floods and other natural disasters.

To complement the work that the State of Wisconsin has achieved on readiness, the Board will propose a best practice approach to integrate disaster and emergency needs of people with disabilities into existing emergency preparedness systems.

According to Michael Steinhauer, Project Director, the main goals of the program will be:

- 1) To increase the ability of the emergency management, public health, and service systems to address the needs of people with disabilities.
- 2) To increase the ability of Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Managed Care Organizations, IRIS Independent Consultants, and provider agencies to meet the needs of their constituents with disabilities during a disaster.
- 3) To prepare people with disabilities, their families and direct support workers to take action in an emergency.

- More -

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This will be achieved by:

- 1) Consulting with counties on a process to account for people with disabilities and their assistance needs;
- 2) Consulting with Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Managed Care Organizations in Family Care or Partnership, IRIS Independent Consultants, and community organizations serving people with disabilities on incorporating emergency planning into people's long term care service plans;
- 3) Producing an Emergency and Disaster Readiness Packet for consumers/families/caregivers to learn of and plan the elements for effective, personal disaster planning; and to
- 4) Provide technical assistance in planning accessible medical/emergency sheltering for people with disabilities in case of medical need.

“The Emergency and Disaster Readiness Packets for people with disabilities will be available for wide distribution around summer, 2009 after some field testing,” said Steinhauer.

For more information about the program, contact Michael Steinhauer at 608-266-8337.