

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **State Agencies, American Red Cross Announce Agreement in Coordinating Disaster Services**

*Severe Weather Signals the Importance of Coordination of Services and Assistance to Disaster Victims*

**ATLANTA** – Tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, and the first tropical storm of the 2013 hurricane season are powerful reminders of the need for effective coordination of disaster services. No one agency or organization can handle the needs of large numbers of people affected by disasters. In Georgia, an agreement for multi-agency coordination of disaster services defines the roles and responsibilities of the American Red Cross, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Department of Human Services and the Georgia Department of Public Health. A five-year agreement will be signed June 19, 2013 and, with its new provisions, is a renewal of a previous agreement.

“This agreement is essential to providing a timely and efficient emergency response during and after weather events or other disasters,” said Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health. “We must be prepared to respond to immediate needs, but also those essential needs that come later such as mental health and general wellness.”

The agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding, includes planning and response provisions for people that have physical, sensory, mental health, and cognitive and/or intellectual disabilities affecting their ability to function independently without assistance as well as those individuals who are not self-sufficient and who do not have adequate health/medical support from caregivers, family, or friends.

The multi-agency agreement complies with the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan, an executive order issued by Governor Nathan Deal and administered by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security.



Leaders from the American Red Cross, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Human Services will sign the document at 10:00 am on Wednesday, June 19, 2013, at 2 Peachtree Street, NW, Atlanta.

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### **About the Georgia Department of Public Health**

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency in preventing disease, injury and disability; promoting health and well-being; and preparing for and responding to disasters from a health perspective. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years of consolidation with other departments. At the state level, DPH functions through numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices. Locally, DPH funds and collaborates with Georgia's 159 county health departments and 18 public health districts. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH's main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records, and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information about DPH, visit [www.dph.ga.gov](http://www.dph.ga.gov).