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Long Hill Township Resident Provides Vital Training to NJ 211 Staff Client Resource Specialists Prepare for Special Needs Registry Calls

Paramus, NJ March 13, 2008 - NJ 211, a free, statewide service that has been designed to put people in need of assistance, in touch with community resources that provide solutions, has trained call center client resource specialists to assist residents with special needs to prepare for emergency situations. Two separate training sessions were led by NJ 211 data content manager, Jennifer Kofoet-Hay, a resident of Long Hill Township in Morris County. Ms. Kofoet-Hay has ten years of experience working in call centers and recently developed the guidelines that ensure consistency throughout the NJ 211 vast database of health and human service resources. During the Special Needs Registry training, client resource specialists were instructed on how to complete the online registration form for callers and educated about the program so that they would be fully equipped to answer anticipated inquiries.

The Offices of Homeland Security and Preparedness and Emergency Management have partnered with NJ 211 on this important initiative. The Special Needs Registry became active this month. Currently a pilot program, it is open to residents with special needs who live in the coastal communities of Atlantic, Monmouth, Ocean and Cape May counties. Residents are encouraged to call 2-1-1 to register so that local officials will be better equipped to assist them in times of natural disaster or emergency situations. When they call, clients will be advised that this registration is the first forward-thinking step in the process of them taking ownership for preparing their personal emergency plan in the event of a disaster.

“In addition to assisting people who want to add their names to the Special Needs Registry, this collaborative effort offers us an opportunity to introduce NJ 211 to more New Jersey residents,” said Tom Toronto, Chairman of the NJ211 Partnership. “It also highlights, in a very real way, the benefit that NJ 211 brings to state initiatives. We have excellent programs and resources in the state. Unfortunately, citizens don’t always know where to go to find them. With NJ 211 in place, all residents need to do is dial 2-1-1 and ask.” Mr. Toronto explains.

More than just a straight information and referral service, NJ 211 is designed to provide compassionate care and help clients develop an action plan that addresses their current needs. Resources in the database are also accessible via the NJ 211 Web site (www.nj211.org) that has been designed to enable online searches and support real-time conversational exchange between the client and a call center professional through a built-in Instant Messaging functionality. In addition to the search and Instant Messaging capabilities, the site provides an abundance of information on subjects that affect residents throughout the state.

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About NJ 211

2-1-1 is a system of support, using inbound calls as well as a Web site (www.nj211.org) with Instant Messaging capability, that is intended to provide free, personal assistance to anyone trying to navigate their way through the vast network of health and human services, government assistance programs and local community resources in New Jersey. 2-1-1 is aimed at lessening the burden of callers by providing understanding and compassion along with the information that is needed to address the caller's concerns. This confidential service is supported by United Way in partnership with the State of New Jersey – Department of Human Services and the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness.