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## Federal government presents Georgia with "Crisis Center Award"

*September 24, 2007*

ATLANTA – The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration presented Georgia's Crisis & Access Line (GCAL) with the "Crisis Center Award" for its achievements during this month's national conference. Funded by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, GCAL was cited for its large caller volume - 100,000 calls annually – and its success in connecting callers to help. The call center's performance has also helped to earn a first-ever three year accreditation, the highest level available, through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Created in 2005, GCAL is among key reforms recently designed to improve access to Georgia mental health services.

"The most important service our mental health system should offer is connecting people to help. We're doing that," said Gwen Skinner, Director for the Georgia Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases.

In addition to receiving the Crisis Center Award, GCAL has received a three-year- accreditation through CARF – helping to ensure continued quality-driven outcomes, staff development, and good intervention procedures to ensure that clients receive safe, timely and appropriate responses in a crisis.

The Georgia Crisis & Access Line responds to persons with mental disorders and alcohol or other substance abuse issues, often providing direct services at emergency rooms, schools, or wherever assistance is requested. Before GCAL, Georgia had as many as 25 crisis access lines. Each system had very different approaches and callers were limited to getting help based on where they lived and when they called.

During after-hours, calls were often answered by administrative staff and holiday coverage was mostly non-existent.

Now, Georgia has one crisis and access line. It not only operates 24 hours and 7 days a week, it now has a clinical staff. Moreover, the new service has saved \$1.2 million compared to the previous system.

For more information on the Georgia Crisis & Access Line, call 1-800-715-4225 or access [mygcal.com](http://mygcal.com). GCAL is managed by Behavioral Health Link.

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