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GEORGIA THE WINNER OF INNOVATIONS AWARD

ATLANTA – Georgia recently walked away with the 2008 Council of State Governments Innovations Award for pioneering a high-tech statewide crisis and access line center. Funded by the Department of Human Resources (DHR), the Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL) is viewed by the crisis industry as a new generation crisis center. Established in 2006, GCAL which is operated by Behavioral Health Link (BHL), is one of many DHR reforms designed to improve Georgia’s Behavioral Health Care System. The award will be presented in Omaha, Nebraska December 4-7 at the Council of State Governments Annual Conference.

“The award confirms that the Georgia Crisis & Access Line is setting the standard for ensuring continuity of care for people with psychiatric needs,” states Gwen Skinner, Director for the DHR Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases. “Through our partnership with Behavioral Health Link, we have created an innovative system which is improving access.”

GCAL is a resource for Georgians who need either routine or crisis behavioral health care. The system, which includes mobile services, is recognized for providing fast, friendly and accurate connections on a 24-hour basis. With on-the-spot appointment scheduling for services, barriers to getting help are diminished - reducing the need for costly and intensive services. Recent studies suggest that those who are not assessed until they reach the emergency room are three times as likely to be admitted to psychiatric inpatient units. On average, GCAL receives 1,000 calls per day.

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David Covington, GCAL Director, states “the combination of high-touch, high-tech and high volume innovations are creating unprecedented benefits for the public sector crisis industry and for Georgians in need of help.”

This past spring, the Council of State Governments evaluated numerous programs in departments as diverse as agriculture, corrections, education, homeland security, transportation and health. Winners were selected based on newness, creativeness, effectiveness, transferability, and significance.

A brief video tour was created for this application. It provides the DHR history of GCAL and walk-through of the crisis center. It can be accessed at <http://www.behavioralhealthlink.com/News/Awards.html>

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