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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **March is Brain Injury Awareness Month**

In order to bring awareness to brain injuries and the lives of those affected by it, March is recognized as national Brain Injury Awareness Month.

This year, millions of people in the United States will sustain a traumatic brain injury from falls, motor vehicle traffic crashes, collisions with moving or stationary objects, and assaults.

An estimated 1.7 million people sustain a brain injury each year, resulting in 1.365 million emergency room visits, 275,000 hospitalizations, and 52,000 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Brain Injury Awareness Month honors the millions of survivors, who with proper acute care, therapeutic rehabilitation and adequate long-term supports, are living with brain injury every day," said Susan H. Connors, president/ CEO of the Brain Injury Association of America.

Plans are already underway for honoring Alabama's citizens with traumatic brain injury ( TBI ) and their families, and increasing awareness to the general population about brain injury through the Alabama Head Injury Task Force and its members.

A statewide advisory board for TBI in Alabama, the task force was established in 1989 by the commissioner of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services ( ADRS ) in response to the fragmented system of care for people with TBI . The group's mission is to develop the ideal service delivery system for Alabamians who experience a TBI .

Its activities include developing and monitoring the Statewide TBI Plan to address the needs of children, youth, and adults with TBI and their families; providing statewide coordination among agencies and organizations, creating a forum for communicating TBI issues, and contributing to the development of training for professionals.

The membership of the task force brings a diversity of knowledge and expertise in state government, policy and legislative issues, service delivery, advocacy, consumer and family issues, and expertise in TBI .

Members include people with TBI , their family members, the Alabama Head Injury Foundation, the University of Alabama at Birmingham ( UAB ) TBI Model System, the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program, and the Coalition of Domestic Violence.

The group also includes state agencies, including the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Senior Services, and the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

All four major programs of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services ( ADRS ) participate in the task force. The divisions include Alabama's Early Intervention System, Children's Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Service, and the State of Alabama Independent Living Service.

Once a person sustains a brain injury and is referred to ADRS , care coordinators work one-on-one with the

individual and his or her family to educate them about the brain injury and what to do next.

There are many resources within the state to address the needs of individuals with a brain injury. The key is to act quickly, said Maria Crowley, ADRS state head injury coordinator.

“The more we can do for someone in the two-year window after they are injured cognitively, the better they are going to be long term,” said Crowley.