

Assistant Secretary's Talking Points Friday, November 12, 2004 Alabama Disaster Assistance Funds

On behalf of Secretary Tommy Thompson, it is my pleasure to announce that \$3.2 million has been made available to Alabama for critical services to communities that continue to recover from the multiple hurricanes that hit the state this fall.

- **\$1.9 million** of the total will be used for disaster assistance for Alabama's vulnerable elderly population.
 - We know that Alabama's aging network – consisting of the Commission on Aging, led by Executive Director, Irene Collins, the Area Agencies on Aging, and the hundreds of local community service providers -- have done an outstanding job in providing essential services and assistance to older persons and their caregivers who needed meals, case management, counseling, transportation and housing;
 - Many aging staff have put aside their own personal needs in order to assure the safety and well-being of the aging population living in the community. Many personnel worked 12 to 18 hour days for seven days a week to make sure seniors were cared for;
 - In the early days immediately after the hurricane, many seniors lost their homes or their dwellings were condemned. The Aging Network worked tirelessly to find suitable temporary and in some cases permanent living arrangements;
 - Immediately following the storms, it took hours and hours of going door to door to see who needed help and find ways to connect people with the help they needed;
 - The devastation left many seniors without food and water; and
 - Staff have contributed a heroic effort to assist in extensive chore services and clean-up activities, both inside and outside the home, home repairs, and essential services necessary to meet daily needs.
- **\$1.3 million** will meet needs related to domestic violence, adult services, assistance for individuals with developmental disabilities, and for child welfare services.

Earlier today in Tallahassee with Governor Jeb Bush, I awarded funds to Florida for similar purposes.

In addition, I would also like to mention that we are awarding funds (\$1.2 million) to Puerto Rico to assist with the social service needs of their elderly, homeless and disabled populations.