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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Illinois Center for Autism Will be Affected by “Doomsday Budget”

SPRINGFIELD, June 10, 2009 – The leadership of The Autism Program of Illinois (TAP) this week forecast the closure of many, if not all of its locations across Illinois unless a responsible state budget is adopted for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1.

“The so-called ‘doomsday budget’ currently under negotiation is no budget at all,” said Georgia Winson, Chief of The Autism Program of Illinois (TAP). “It is a death sentence for TAP and many other human service providers across the state. Last year, Governor Blagojevich cut our budget approved by the General Assembly by fifty percent. Then, on his last day in office, he added another 5.8 percent cut. Unless our governmental leaders can work together to adequately fund critical services like TAP, we will wind up closing our doors. TAP programs affect more than 16,000 families. Families receiving critical services through TAP centers in their area will no longer have access. In many instances TAP is the only provider in their region. “

TAP is the nation’s largest statewide autism services network. A model for the federal Autism Treatment Acceleration Act, now pending in the Congress, TAP has 12 service centers distributed across the State of Illinois including the Illinois Center for Autism (ICA), located in

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Fairview Heights, Illinois. Centers offer a variety of services, including diagnosis, social skills groups, parent training and physical, speech, behavioral and music therapy. Each TAP center has a Family and Community Resource Center, which makes a wide variety of educational materials, games, transitional aids and other resources available at no charge to families.

Since its inception, TAP has trained more than 28,000 parents, health care providers, first responder and educators. Additionally, TAP has used its appropriation of less than \$5 million to leverage an additional \$18 million in non-state resources for autism in Illinois.

“It is always difficult to raise taxes,” Winson noted. “But in these times of financial crisis, it is the responsible thing to do. We urge the governor and legislative leaders to work together to craft a revenue package that meets the real needs of our state without penalizing our most vulnerable citizens.”

Although ICA will feel the impact of these cuts, we will not be forced to shut our doors. However, our resource library and some training will take a direct hit if TAP funding is lost and if funding from Department of Human Services is slashed, then our Client and Family Support Program, as well as our Adult programs will be affected.

Winson said that unless action was taken quickly, TAP would need to begin the process of closing down its centers across Illinois.

The Illinois Center for Autism, located at 548 S. Ruby Lane in Fairview Heights, is a non-profit, community-based mental health treatment and education agency. For more information about these services or autism, visit the Illinois Center for Autism website at www.illinoiscenterforautism.org.