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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday Sept. 13, 2001

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### **HHS EMERGENCY RESPONSE: SUMMARY REPORT, SEPT. 13**

NEW YORK - HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson today met with New York Gov. George Pataki and New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to discuss emergency response and needs. Secretary Thompson also viewed the site of the World Trade Center disaster, and he visited patients and doctors at St. Vincent Hospital and met with health officials including the New York City medical examiner.

"New York will need substantial and long-term assistance in coping with this unprecedented event," he said. "HHS is pumping in new support every day, and necessary resources are only a phone call away. Today we provided new funds and services to help rescue workers, victims, the elderly and others who have been directly affected. I have pledged to the Governor and the Mayor that we will do everything needed to get through this emergency, confront the deep and lasting wounds that have been inflicted, and move forward."

HHS has deployed more than 650 personnel, including private sector personnel in emergency medical teams, to disaster-affected areas.

HHS highlights today included:

- Announcement of mental health assistance, especially for areas affected by Tuesday's terrorist air attacks
- Announcement of initial grants to support immediate needs in the New York City area
- Announcement of a new 800-number to serve elderly and home-bound New York residents
- Additional emergency resource deployments to New York and Pennsylvania
- Blood and pharmaceutical monitoring.

#### Mental Health Response

HHS released an initial \$1 million for mental health services and longer-range planning to respond to the emotional and psychological impact of the loss of life and damages inflicted by the terrorist attack.

In addition, personnel from HHS' Substance Abuse and mental Health Administration were dispatched to New York to conduct longer-range planning for services to rescue workers, survivors and others.

The HHS action were taken in response to concerns expressed by state and local officials in all the areas impacted by the terrorist acts.

Secretary Thompson emphasized that HHS would help address not only immediate mental health needs, but the expected long-term results of the attacks.

#### Other Immediate Grant Assistance

Grant assistance announced today by Secretary Thompson for New York City totaled \$2.5 million, which is in addition to the \$20 billion amount released by President Bush Thursday morning. This initial release of funds is for immediately identified needs. Secretary Thompson pledged continued long-term support for affected areas.

In addition to the \$1 million mental health grant, HHS announced a \$1 million grant to New York City to support immediate social and community services, including temporary food and shelter, emergency child care needs, and needs of emergency and relief workers.

Additionally \$500,000 was made available for immediate support of services to senior New Yorkers, including emergency meals, transportation and other support services.

#### New Toll-Free Assistance Service

A 24-hour hotline was established today for senior New Yorkers living in Lower Manhattan who may have trouble getting their medications, personal services, therapies, transportation to health care professionals, or other important daily living needs. Parents with children enrolled in Child Health Plus can also call this hotline for questions about their health care needs.

The new 24-hour, rapid response hotline for help is 1-800-331-7767.

Translators will be available for assistance on that number.

#### Deployments

New deployments of personnel included:

- A National Medical Response Team (NMRT) was dispatched to New York to help detect any possible industrial chemical-related problems that may result from the collapse of buildings. The NMRTs are part of the National Disaster Medical System, trained to deal especially with chemical release situations in which mass casualties are involved. Deployment of the NMRT to New York is a precaution to determine possible chemical risks and to be on-site in the event any risks materialize. NMRTs are also prepared to deal with bioterrorism events. CDC had issued precautionary instructions to health departments Tuesday to be on special alert for possible clusters of unusual disease symptoms, and hospitals were notified by state and local health officials to report any such incidents promptly. The CDC instruction was a normal precaution for emergency situations.
- A portable morgue was dispatched from Houston, Tex., to Pennsylvania to assist in identification and preparation of bodies from the air crash near Somerset County, Pa. The portable morgue, as well as a support Disaster Mortuary Operational Team, were sent at the request of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which is at the crash site.
- Under the direction of the Office of the Surgeon General, the PHS Commissioned Corps supplied 35 medical personnel to Bethesda Naval Medical Center. They will provide back-up for personnel who have joined the staff of the Navy's 250-bed hospital ship USNS Comfort, which sailed for New York harbor today. More Commissioned Corps personnel are expected to be deployed to this site.
- Personnel from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now total 15 in New York City, with special duties to watch for and help prevent possible secondary diseases, including infectious disease and effects of dust and other debris. CDC personnel are also assisting the city's rescue workers who have been injured or exposed to health-threatening materials during their operations.

#### Medical Supplies

HHS' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continues to monitor pharmaceutical and blood availability, and it reported today that supplies were adequate at present. High blood donation has resulted in some blood banks reaching capacity at present, but Secretary Thompson emphasized that blood donation requires ongoing commitment.

"While the incredible response of the public has been lifesaving in this crisis, the blood supply is almost always tight and increased blood donation will remain a continuing need," Secretary Thompson said. "The ideal will be long-term commitment and scheduling of blood donation to ensure a steady and reliable supply."

Many blood banks can schedule donation in advance, and Secretary Thompson encouraged this response.

FDA also helped arrange deliveries of skin products for burn victims in New York and Washington, D.C.

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