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**** PRESS RELEASE ****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
ISSUED: October 18, 2007
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Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office to Receive Diversity Award

SPD Recognized for Creation of "People in Crisis" Program

(Madison) The Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office (SPD) will receive a Diversity Achievement Award in recognition of its "creation of an interactive exercise called 'People in Crisis.'" The award ceremony is scheduled to take place at 3:00 p.m. on October 18, 2007 in the State Capitol's Senate Parlor. The SPD also received a Diversity Award in 2005 and 2003.

The "People in Crisis" program is designed to help participants better understand what it might feel like to live in a low-income family trying to meet basic needs each month. SPD staff along with other justice system professionals from all areas of the state participated in the program. Because of the success of the program, the SPD has presented it to other advocacy-focused organizations.

State Public Defender Nicholas L. Chiarkas noted, "We are honored to be recognized with a Diversity Award. This marks the third such award for the agency, and it reflects the agency's commitment to valuing diversity."

Jennifer Bias, the SPD's Affirmative Action Officer, added, "Given that our agency is faced with the dynamics of poverty on a daily basis, the 'People in Crisis' program is very important to the SPD. Our staff strives to be effective as well as sensitive when interacting with clients, the public, and in our communities."

The award is sponsored by the State Council on Affirmative Action and the Office of State Employment Relations. State Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) will take part in the ceremony. Jennifer Bias and Gina Pruski, the SPD's Training Director, will accept the award on behalf of the entire agency.

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