

## PREFACE

Delaware County was devastated by the floods of June 2006. More than 1,100 households were adversely affected and recovery has been not only a challenge for them but for us all. In June 2007 an unusually rare but extremely intense rain storm struck a small portion of a few hills in Delaware County outside of Downsview in the Town of Colchester. In a span of less than 2 hours some 8 inches of rain fell in this area leading to a tsunami B type wall of water that struck roads, houses, cars and people producing results on the same scale as those a year earlier. Delaware County, source of the River that bears its name, provides in excess of 1,000 square miles to the Delaware watershed. Almost all of the remainder of the County is part of the Susquehanna River watershed. In view of Delaware's location and the role it plays as a watershed for two of the Eastern United States' major rivers, the need for preparation for the next emergency is at hand. For individual households, the next emergency may not be water related, it could be a fire, tornado or even an earthquake! As we look back and consider how our world has changed since 9/11, we must be aware that the dangers inherent with disasters may take on many different faces. What they hold for us in common is the fact that our level of preparedness can make the difference between saving and protecting both lives and property that might otherwise be lost and/or more seriously damaged.

The *Household Disaster Guide* is an effort to raise our collective level of preparedness as we seek to apply what we have learned from the June 2006 floods and combine that knowledge with other pertinent information sources. This work has relied on other similar efforts to compile information and references in a useful and easy to apply manner. The *Guide* has been designed to provide a strong basis for understanding that there are two different but related impacts upon families and individuals when a disaster strikes. First, some disasters directly affect our physical health requiring medical treatment and even hospitalization. Second, our mental health is often affected, sometimes even more adversely than our physical health. The potential mental health affects on children, particularly those ten years of age and younger, can be very traumatic capable of triggering long term health issues that require patience, understanding and treatment. We need to have a strong awareness of how each of these health issues can impact us and our families and take strong steps to mitigate the potential of suffering from either of them.

The *Guide* is also our attempt to assist households and individuals that were impacted by the floods in their recovery effort. Implementation of the concepts discussed herein along with use of the strategies is likely to accelerate long term recovery efforts and leave all of us better prepared to face the next disaster. Those of us in the human service community believe that we as professionals gained a valuable insight from these flooding events. We saw many homes and families directly affected that were not in previously identified flood zones. We came to realize that some historic weather patterns that have made large portions of Delaware County susceptible to flooding are no longer reliable and 100 year flood projections can repeat themselves in less than a ten year period. We now see that no Delaware County family can say they are truly protected from a natural disaster, even a flood. Preparation now will be our best defense against the next disaster regardless of which season it occurs in or the specific aspect of nature the disaster emanates from.

This booklet has been prepared by Delaware Support & Services, Inc. and other members of the Delaware County Human Needs Committee (Committee members are listed on p. 43 in the Appendix), organized to assist with all forms of recovery efforts after the floods. The costs of preparation have been underwritten by a grant from the New York State Office of Mental Health through the Delaware County Department of Mental Health.