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**DeNUCCI SAYS LACK OF RESOURCES HAMPERS
DISABLED PERSONS PROTECTION COMMISSION**

State Auditor Joe DeNucci reported today that the Disabled Persons Protection Commission's lack of adequate staff, combined with an increasing caseload, has hampered the agency's ability to investigate abuse allegations of vulnerable citizens and assign and oversee protective services in a timely manner. Without investigation reports being completed in a timely manner, persons with disabilities may be at risk of further abuse.

DeNucci's audit determined that the Commission, even though it has a dedicated and knowledgeable investigative staff, was unable to complete investigations on 653 cases, or 77 percent of its caseload, during the mandated 30-day limit in fiscal 2007.

According to DeNucci's audit, the Commission's hotline serves as the main source of cases reported to the agency. In the last few years, the Commission has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of hotline calls it has received, and consequently the number of investigations it must undertake.

In fiscal year 2007, for example, the Commission received a total of 14,847 hotline calls, a 152 percent jump from fiscal year 2001. Approximately half of the calls constitute potential abuse cases while the remainder are informational and referrals. The audit found that the Commission had controls in place for the initial assessment of abuse reports within the 24-hour time frame mandated by state law. Cases that met the established criteria for abuse were then either referred to the appropriate human service agency for further investigation or established as a case under the Commission's jurisdiction. However, the audit found that the increase in the Commission's caseload has had an impact on its ability to investigate cases of abuse and to establish action plans within statutorily mandated time frames.

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Auditor DeNucci, who co-sponsored legislation creating the Disabled Persons Protection Commission when he was House Chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Human Services and Elderly Affairs, said it is clear that the recent rise in the number of cases assigned for investigation requires additional staffing for the Commission.

“The Commission needs additional financial resources so that it will be able to complete its investigative work promptly and fulfill its mission of ensuring that protective services are provided for disabled persons who are victims of abuse,” said DeNucci.