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**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

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**THE MARYLAND CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION AND THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ANNOUNCE NEW COMMUNICATION AID FOR FIRST
RESPONDERS**

COLUMBIA, MD (September 14, 2011) – The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA), in partnership with the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), the Frederick Police Department, the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission, and Johns Hopkins University Division of Public Safety Leadership, today announce the development of a "point to picture" communications aid for first responders. The development and production of this communications aid was made possible through a grant received by the MCPA through the Governor's Office of Crime, Control, and Prevention.

"The communications aid is filled with illustrations that are easily understood by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing as well as persons with limited English proficiency," said Chief Bernard Gerst, President of MCPA. "While this booklet does not replace the use of a qualified interpreter, it does improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the first responder's attempts to obtain critical information," he added.

"Both first responders and members of the deaf and hard of hearing community were sharing concerns with my office about communicating in emergency situations," said Lisa Kornberg, Director of ODHH. "When we approached MCPA with the idea for this project, they immediately began working with us," Kornberg continued, "MCPA is truly committed to serving the needs of all members of the community and ODHH is honored to have worked with them on such an important and valuable project."

The communications aid was developed by Maryland School for the Deaf graduate Bobby Harris, who first started working on the project as an intern at the Frederick Police Department back in 2008. Over the last few months, Bobby has worked as a consultant on the grant project, making changes so the booklet is more versatile and can be used across the state. The communications aid and training materials are currently being distributed to agencies with law enforcement officers and first responders across the state.

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