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**Statement of the
Society for Adolescent Medicine
on the Impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on Youth**

BLUE SPRINGS, MO - September 26, 2005 - Healthy adolescence depends upon ongoing connectedness to family, school, and peers. For many youth, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita abruptly severed these ties, threatening their behavioral, emotional and physical health. These losses, disruptions, and displacements have acute and long-term health consequences.

While all adolescents share universal needs such as health care, housing and safety, the adolescent victims of the recent hurricanes have unique needs and specific issues that must be addressed. These needs include reintegrating them into educational and social environments, addressing the behavioral and emotional consequences of the disasters and their aftermath, and ensuring access to age-appropriate health services. The Society for Adolescent Medicine strongly recommends a broad-based response to addressing the needs of these adolescents and urges involvement of all sectors of society.

Despite these challenges, the Society for Adolescent Medicine recognizes the strength and resilience of youth as well as their potential to participate in disaster recovery and reconstruction. Affected adolescents and young adults must be provided opportunities to participate in the development and implementation of community responses to these disasters.

About the Society for Adolescent Medicine

*The **Society for Adolescent Medicine**, founded in 1968, is the only multidisciplinary professional health organization in the United States exclusively committed to improving the physical and psychosocial health and well-being of all adolescents through advocacy, clinical care, health promotion, health services delivery, professional development, and research.*

*Advocacy efforts are supported through local, state, and national efforts to develop comprehensive acute, chronic and preventative health services for youth. The Society publishes and disseminates scholarly information related to adolescent health through its peer-reviewed monthly **Journal of Adolescent Health**. For more information, logon to www.adolescenthealth.org*