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**PENNSYLVANIA LIBRARY RESOURCE BECOMES FASTEST
GROWING REFERENCE SERVICE IN NATION**

'Ask Here PA' Has Answered More Than 125,000 Questions

PITTSBURGH – A live, online reference service hosted by the Commonwealth Libraries has become the fastest growing service of its kind in the nation after only two years in operation, Education Secretary Gerald L. Zahorchak said today during a visit to Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh.

“Ask Here PA,” the commonwealth’s online chat reference and information service, is free to all residents of Pennsylvania, offering information and answers to questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To date, “Ask Here PA” has conducted more than 125,000 sessions.

“In this information age, it is exciting to know that our library services have evolved with technology,” Secretary Zahorchak said. “‘Ask Here PA’ is different from some other online resources because it offers accurate and unbiased information that is verified by a commonwealth librarian.”

“Ask Here PA” provides students and citizens the opportunity to ask questions and receive research assistance in real time. The “Ask Here PA” librarians use live chat, along with the ability to guide users on the Web by sharing resources found on the Internet and in databases.

The resource was launched by Governor Edward G. Rendell in September 2006. There are more than 70 libraries that contribute staff time to answering the inquiries of Pennsylvania citizens. About two-thirds of “Ask Here PA” users are Pennsylvania students in grades K-12.

“This is a great time to re-energize students and teachers by reminding them of new and exciting ways they can continue learning outside the classroom,” Zahorchak said. “The libraries in our state serve as essential tools and resources for our students, and they are a great support and extension of our academic system.”

To access this free resource service, visit www.askherepa.org.

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