
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Dear Colleagues:

This week's edition of "DOC" is dedicated to sharing some information I hope you find useful. Please let me know if you want more information about these topics. You know the email address! Good things are happening. Folks are working and are focused. I love it!

One thing I need to give you a heads up on: we will be feeling the economy crunch that everyone else around the country is already feeling. We will have to learn to tighten our belts as Louisiana begins to go deal with this recession. The Governor's Office is projecting budget cuts for FY 2010, and we need to be prepared. We are being asked to look for ways we will meet our mission and operate more efficiently and effectively. Ok, that's the bad news.

In the good news category: I would like to share that we had a very successful meeting with our Regional Managers and Facility Directors to relook at our policies and practices relating to moving kids out of secure care and stepping them down to non-secure placements. We have due dates and deadlines for recommendations. We will also seek ways to work better with our judges and revamp policies as needed. I am really looking forward to seeing what our workgroups present as we look for better ways to make quality decisions about our kids.

We are also very happy to have an NIC-trained consultant working with Jetson staff to develop staffing plans and create new management tools that will help us make appropriate staffing decisions. This work will benefit all of OJJ as it will help us improve operations in all of our facilities.

Work continues with the Missouri Youth Services Institute (MYSI) as we move forward to better some of our work practices. We really appreciate the involvement of MYSI's Jema Hill-Cook – she spent time at Bridge City three weeks ago and at Swanson this week to provide us with valuable information. We will be following up with our Directors to address some of her suggestions for improvement.

A major policy issue that I want to discuss with you is employee discipline. I discovered, after working at OJJ for a very short time, that the disciplinary process takes far too long. Incidents can occur and it might be a year or more before definitive action is taken and the matter is resolved. If a process takes that long, that process is broken. It is not fair to employees and can also put kids at risk. The idea behind the disciplinary process is to ensure accountability and for staff to learn from past errors and mistakes. I've asked the team that is working on this issue to be ready to implement an improved system by January, 2009.

Well, that's about enough serious stuff. I want to thank you all for everything that you do every day. Have a great week and enjoy the Tuesday holiday - be sure to vote if you have not done so already. As the saying goes: vote early and often! (Just kidding!)

Sincerely,

"Doc"

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