
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Dear Colleagues:

Hello again – I hope you've had a good week. As usual we've had lots of meetings and activities here in Baton Rouge, and many of the meetings have had to do with the budget.

The Division of Administration announced the proposed executive budget today. Governor Jindal stated that, "even as Louisiana's economy continues to out-perform the national economy and the South, we are not immune to the current national economic downturn." All state agencies are facing significant reductions and OJJ will feel the pain the same as every other agency. Under the proposed budget, we will see a reduction of \$21.7 million – a 13 percent overall reduction for us.

This budget cut will impact everyone throughout the agency. The Field Services budget will be slim, and contract services will be curtailed. We will see major reductions in tracker/mentor services, psychological evaluations, in-home counseling, and prevention/diversion programs. We will see cuts in day treatment programs, and in the services provided by LSUHSC.

But before we all start worrying that the sky is falling, let's look on the bright side. Although this is a truly difficult time for OJJ, we feel that we can be creative with our thinking and find the best ways to use our scarce resources wisely. The executive team will be working next week on strategies for moving forward with what we have. We've been fortunate during the past few years, to have had generous budgets to provide services for our kids, but now we have to be realistic as we tighten our belts and think of ways to meet the mission while we reduce expenditures.

This is where you come in. Each of you knows your job and what resources you need, and our kids need, to be successful. Think carefully about what we can do to save money. I need you to submit your ideas to your supervisor or unit head, who will send your ideas up the chain to the executive team. There are a lot of things we can do locally, and certainly on a statewide basis, to save resources and still meet the mission.

We're already doing some out-of-the-box thinking and reaching out to partner with other agencies. For instance, OJJ supports prevention and diversion programs, but we are not mandated to provide these services. We are working with the LA Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) for support of these programs using some of the economic stimulus funds coming from Washington. By partnering with other organizations and agencies, and identifying ways to save as well as non-traditional sources of support, we will continue to provide quality services to our youth and meet the mission. In the end, we will become a stronger agency, a community resource that others will look to for innovative ideas and solutions.

So, please give some thought to cost-saving ideas and pass them on to your supervisors. OJJ is a strong agency with staff who are resilient, smart and mission-driven. Each of us has one professional goal – providing the services possible for the kids in our care and custody. I really think we can meet with mission at the same time we tighten the budget.

As always, thanks to each and every one of you for the work you do every day to meet the mission, take care of our kids, and be good stewards of our resources.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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