
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Even though most of us are not hearing about the state's budget issues daily, it's an ever-present situation that we continue to deal with. Two of Governor Jindal's initiatives are the Commission on Streamlining Government and Outcome-Based Budgeting.

All agencies have been asked to come up with ways to provide services better and more efficiently with less. We need to think outside the box and think of new ways of doing our work at less cost than in the past. It's good for the agency, and it's good for the taxpayers. Service delivery staff sometimes readily see opportunities to economize. Let us hear your suggestions for streamlining OJJ activities and working more efficiently.

We are working with DSS and the courts to rethink how FINS is structured and set up. FINS is sometimes the bridge from providing services to a family and child, to supervision by a Probation and Parole Officer. In many cases, a child starts out with FINS, and the net is widened, drawing that child into the juvenile justice system. We need to think of ways to keep kids out of contact with the system. There is a lot of interest in continuing this area in our reform efforts.

Another important component of reform is integration of services. OJJ is almost totally dependent on tax dollars for the provision of services. As we work with our partners such as DSS and the MacArthur Foundation, to integrate services, there might be opportunities for coordination throughout the continuum of care. As we move forward, we may be able to take advantage of Medicaid to provide expanded services within the community, such as mental health counseling, day treatment and in-home services. We need to focus on providing appropriate services within local communities so that we will not continue to send kids to secure care. Research shows that if we can provide early intervention services to youth, we can reduce risk while addressing their needs. This is an important component of reform. We will keep you informed of our progress.

This weekend the nation will celebrate Labor Day, which is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It is a national tribute to the contributions that workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country. For many of us, Labor Day marks the end of summer. Some put away the white shoes until spring. That reminds me of a friend who drank beer all summer, but quit on Labor Day. She switched to the hard stuff from Labor Day til Memorial Day when beer was back on the menu. I guess each of us has our own rituals to mark the change of seasons!

I want you to know that each and every one of you is appreciated. The contribution that you make to the success of our agency and to meeting our mission are recognized and valued. OJJ is a terrific team, and I am proud to be a part of it.

Would it be an oxymoron to say that I hope you all get a little rest on Labor Day? You all deserve the holiday. Each one of you is appreciated for the work you do daily to meet the mission. I hope you all have a wonderful long weekend.

Sincerely,
"Doc"

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