
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I've been on the road again this week. We had our regular Monday meetings plus another CSoc (Coordinated System of Care) leadership meeting Monday. We continue to move forward at a quick pace on CSoc and I appreciate the hard work that OJJ staff are doing. A number of our staff are spending precious work time on this project, and everyone involved with the project really appreciates their expertise.

I had a short day in the office Tuesday before heading out to north Louisiana for meetings in Monroe. I am grateful every day for the blessing and the curse of cell phones and blackberries. I would be totally dysfunctional without these handy instruments. I was on the phone for all four hours going up to Monroe and all four hours returning from the north. I am happy that I can return calls and get work done, but I want you to know that I am not texting or emailing while driving.

Wednesday morning we attended the Juvenile Justice Summit at ULM in Monroe, and I was glad to see so many OJJ staff there. RM Ruth Stephens from Tallulah and some of her staff were there, as were some of the staff from Shreveport and Monroe. I had a really good discussion on family engagement with RM Randy Hill from Natchitoches, PPS Kim Scott and PPS Rick Ladner from the Shreveport office. I was pleased that OJJ had a nice showing at the summit. Our presence was appreciated by the judges and district attorneys who attended. There was much to be learned and I was happy to be included on the agenda. I gave a quick update on OJJ progress and activities. I appreciate the professional work of the judges and DAs who come together, in their respective roles, to do the right thing in the best interest of public safety for the citizens of the state of Louisiana.

After the summit ended, we went to Swanson for a tour. There were 16 guests, including Judge Patricia Koch and some of her staff from Alexandria, Rapides Parish ADA Daphne Robinson and staff from several agencies in Rapides Parish. We appreciate their interest and the time they spent touring the school building, Pecan and Evergreen housing units, and visiting with the kids. All the kids were happy to see us and were very friendly. We had a really good day, and my thanks to Director Carolyn Atkins and her staff for the great job they did in arranging for the tour.

I mentioned having a discussion on family engagement with staff from Natchitoches and Shreveport, and I would like to share my thoughts with you. OJJ needs to move toward family-driven services, because there is no substitute for family for our kids. Our job is to help get the kid and the family back on track. We (the State) should not be raising children. Our job is to take at-risk and delinquent kids and provide the appropriate interventions that work to lower the risk and help that family get back on track. The family structure and the community will help the kid succeed. Our job is to formulate a plan for services for the family that is in crisis, then get out of the way and let them get on with their lives. Yes, we make a difference, but not THE difference. If the child's home is not the best environment for him, or her, there may be other family members who can step in to support that youth and help turn that life around.

We find out what is causing the problem, identify the criminogenic factors, and we provide the services and the regimen of crime-free behavior. With good assessments and proper interventions addressing those criminogenic needs, and some restorative justice activities along the way, the risk is lowered, and we get out of their lives. When we can see our kids out in the community and know they are doing well, that's our reward.

Well, enough of that. I'll conclude by saying that it's always so uplifting for me to be in the field, visiting the staff, and seeing the good work you are doing every day to protect public safety and to meet the mission by getting kids and families back on track.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

PS – October 1-31 is the PbS (Performance-based Standards) data collection period. The data collected during this time will represent all the hard work put forth by facility staff every day to create positive youth outcomes. Data collection month is very demanding for the facility site coordinators and we want to give them a lot of support and encouragement.

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