
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Well, the session has not even started yet and we've already had three budget hearings. We've been before the House, Senate and Joint Budget Committees. Things have been going pretty well for us, much better this year than last year. I'm happy to report that there has been nothing about our hearings in the newspapers this week. People seem to be more interested in drivers' license fees and adult Probation and Parole's fees, which is a good thing. We don't mind **not** having attention on us. As I have mentioned before, we can expect basically a standstill budget for next fiscal year, with the possible addition of \$2 million in the Governor's recommended budget for depopulating Swanson by 48 beds and opening the moderate care facility at Columbia.

You may have heard about the Coordinated System of Care (CSoC) initiative, that brings together OJJ, DHH, DSS and the Department of Education to coordinate services for at risk youth. CSoC is part of a national movement, and is an evidence-based approach designed to keep children at home, in school, and out of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. All four department secretaries are coming together to coordinate this massive project. The four secretaries met today, and there is a lot of good work going on. We have an ambitious schedule and I am pleased that we will soon see some real improvement in service delivery.

One of the things on our radar is to look at how FINS has worked for kids. We want to ensure that kids are receiving the appropriate level of service, and find other ways to work with lower level offenses such as ungovernables and truants, than putting them through the court system.

We held another tour of Bridge City this week for two legislators, Rep. Gary Smith of Norco and Rep. Patrick Williams of Shreveport, who is the chairman of our House Appropriations Sub-Committee. I want to thank them both for taking the time to see the facility. I know that our youth and staff enjoyed the visit and showing off the campus. Rep. Williams walks from Shreveport to the State Capitol in Baton Rouge every year to bring awareness to the national epidemics of childhood obesity and autism. I asked him what some of the strangest or most memorable sights he has seen by the side of the road along his 226 mile walk and he responded SNAKES! Dead and alive. So of course I told him about all the snake stories we've had in past issues of What's Up, Doc? I'm sure we will soon have some more reptile reports now that spring is finally here.

I know that spring has arrived by all the clover and weeds that are popping up everywhere. St. Patrick's Day is coming up next week and that means parades and....watch out for that green beer. Something tells me that if your beer is green you probably should not drink it.

Oh, and another thing to remember this weekend is to spring forward – set your clocks ahead when you go to bed Saturday night unless, of course, you just want to wait until 2 a.m. to do it. If you don't set the clocks ahead you might be an hour late to work next week.

I look forward to talking you again next week. As always, thanks to every one of you, in every office and facility, for meeting the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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