
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

Vol. 3. No. 2. August 13, 2010

Hello, Everyone:

As most of you know, I have had some recent travel adventures. Monday I travelled to New Jersey to observe their Coordinated System of Care (CSoC) and I am happy to report that it was smooth sailing all the way, from catching my direct flight from New Orleans to Philadelphia to on-time arrival with no out-of-control flight attendants. Then came the taxi drive to the hotel in New Jersey. I'd been told the trip would cost about \$45.00 and it would be a 30 minute trek to my final destination. But - it was not to be. It turned out my driver must have had a Garmin GPS that was possessed by demons. The Garmin sent us literally around in circles through the New Jersey backwoods. When the meter read \$82 the driver finally agreed that we were lost and he turned the meter off. We circled around some more, for 45 minutes, until it was long past time to stop and ask for directions. I got to the hotel almost two hours after getting off the plane, and I have to tell you the taxi driver was more rattled than I was. He finally dropped me off - where I was supposed to be - \$95 later. In the end, I felt empathetic toward the driver and I did give him a tip...throw that Garmin in the trash...and \$5.00...leave it to me to feel sorry for the guy who drove me around for two hours.

But, the trip was well worth the drama. It was financed by a grant from DHH, and I was accompanied by Shannon Robshaw, the Coordinated System of Care program director; DHH Deputy Secretary Tony Keck; Asst. Superintendent Donna Nola-Ganey from the Department of Education; DCFS Secretary Ruth Johnson; State Representative Walter Leger; Mimi Hedgecock, policy advisor in the Governor's office and Vee Boyd, from the Federation of Families.

We visited a community management entity (CME), which is part of the New Jersey system of care, and spent two days listening to presentations by various members of the staff who are involved with the care management entity, including administrators and treatment directors, along with staff members from family service organizations.

I was very impressed with the delivery of services, and the focus on family-driven treatment and interventions. That is definitely the direction that we are going here in Louisiana. We are heavily involved in creating a system of care that will be a very big improvement for our state in the delivery of services, particularly the area of mental health services. As envisioned, this will create new ways to divert youth from coming into the criminal justice system (OJJ) and will help us leverage Medicaid dollars, thus taking great advantage of the available resources to support our youth.

This really has been taking up a lot of my time. Back at home following the New Jersey trip, we had an all-day meeting Thursday and a half-day meeting today on CSoC. In many ways this has been excruciating, and it is excruciatingly detailed. I am certainly no expert in Medicaid and all its intricacies, but we do have outstanding experts here in Louisiana who are going to work to make this happen. I am convinced that our youth and our communities will benefit greatly. I am proud to be part of this initiative and I will keep you informed as more progress is made. Don't get me wrong, this is hard work and it represents a major shift in our thinking and in how we do business. As the saying goes, "hang on for the ride, and it's all good." Or, "toes out, heels in," like riding a horse...or a bull...it's too early to tell which. But we are staying in the saddle!

Next week I hope my schedule returns to somewhat normal. At least as far and planes and wayward taxi rides go. In the meantime, I hope each of you has a good (and dry) weekend, with my thanks, as ever, for all you do to meet the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

Mary L. Livers, MSW, PH.D, Deputy Secretary

Office of Juvenile Justice • PO Box 66458 • Baton Rouge, LA 70896 • e: Whatsupdoc?OJJ@la.gov • www.ojd.louisiana.gov