
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

It's Friday afternoon and time for the weekly edition of What's Up, Doc? This edition is coming to you from the Marriot Gateway Airport Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. I am traveling back from a trip to Washington, DC, for which I left Monday. I was invited to be a part of a working group of practitioners and national partners, to launch the National Center for Youth in Custody. This center is envisioned to assist state and local jurisdictions address the needs of youth in custody. There are three major focus areas: conditions of confinement, state compliance with the OJJDP act, and an area of great importance, family engagement. The resource center will be a partnership between OJJDP, with the National Partnership for Juvenile Services and the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA). That meeting took place all day Tuesday. Wednesday through today was the national conference sponsored by OJJDP.

If any of you have the interest and the time, you may want to visit the OJJDP website (<http://www.ojjdp.gov/>). All the workshops and PowerPoint presentations that were made should be listed. I heard the expression that this was a "green" conference – meaning that if you want a printout of a presentation, you have to do it using your own paper. The idea is to read it online. There were some very interesting presentations and workshops, of course. I will be bringing back some ideas that we will talk about operationalizing in Louisiana.

I do get weary of traveling but it is important for me to attend these national conferences. It is important that representatives from Louisiana can participate and bring back the most current thinking in the field. One major takeaway that I got at this conference was the whole arena of family engagement. Family engagement is probably the single-most important aspect of the effectiveness of what we do. We have plans now to focus on this area, with the help of the MacArthur Foundation and I look forward to those opportunities. Family engagement/ involvement has been an area of emphasis for OJJ going back to our initial strategic plan released in December 2005.

When I get back, I will meet with our staff to share ideas, and I hope we will get some ideas from you all, on how to make another cultural shift in all that we do, toward family involvement.

Shifting gears, I have one more meeting tomorrow and then it's back to Baton Rouge, thank goodness.

I don't know what's going on in the world because I don't see any news or newspapers when I'm traveling. If I hear about something happening when I travel, it has to be big. The biggest news now is that protestors have been occupying Wall St. and other public places across the country. The best news that I heard is that the protestors cleaned up the park in New York where they have been for a month. I actually saw some protesters in DC, but it did not look too cozy in the rain.

Well, that's been my week and I can tell you, I will be happy to be back in Louisiana. I appreciate the fact that every one of you, in every office and facility, takes your responsibility seriously. I know that normally when the cat's away the mice will play, but our mice get a lot done, they really like it when I leave. Not so they can play, but so they can get caught up without my interfering with their work day. One thing I can depend on while I am gone is that everyone back home is working diligently every day to meet the mission, no matter where I'm at. Thanks for all you do, and enjoy a lovely fall weekend.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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