
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I guess most of you are thinking that the first week back after the holidays might be a long week – it sure hasn't turned out that way. Everyone I have talked with says the week has flown by. I know it has for me.

I've been on the road – I left Baton Rouge Wednesday for a meeting in Shreveport with Senator Lydia Jackson. She is a member of the joint legislative budget committee and the Senate Appropriations committee. I spent the night with my parents and got up early in the morning to drive to Swanson. DAS Sean Hamilton, Director Carolyn Atkins and I met with the supervisory staff yesterday. We had a good, frank discussion about leadership, responsibility and challenges. The staff identified a number of issues that they are committed to work on to make Swanson a better place. Then I went with Sean, Carolyn and Kim Rushing, the director of the Columbia Center for Youth, to walk through the Columbia facility. The architect has been selected for the renovations and we will soon meet with that group to begin the architectural work that will guide the renovations. I am excited that we will soon be able to move into the facility. We hope to be in by July or August.

We returned to Swanson and conducted a town hall meeting with the whole staff yesterday afternoon. It was very well attended and we had the same candid, productive conversation about expectations for the staff. I was impressed with the commitment expressed by the staff. They indicate that they want to work hard to become better as a team and do a better job to meet the mission. I was very encouraged by the commitment they expressed to work as a team, hold each other accountable and to do the right thing. Director Atkins and her staff are going in the right direction, but there is still much work to do.

I was able to briefly visit the Monroe regional office this morning, and said hello to some of the staff. There was not much time at all, but I had a nice visit with Program Specialist Walteree Barnes, who I found hard at work at her desk at 7:40 a.m.

Monroe RM Patty Newman and I had a very productive meeting with Judge Sharon Marchman and District Attorney Jerry Jones. I continue to be impressed with the work they are doing and their commitment to the welfare of the youth in their community. Congratulations to Judge Marchman – she was recently elected president of the District Court Judges Association, and we all know she will do a great job in that role.

Patty Newman and I then went on to meet with the 4th Judicial District Children and Youth Planning Board, which covers Ouachita and Morehouse Parishes. The CYPB may be interested in becoming a pilot site for the Coordinated System of Care, and invited CSOC director Shannon Robshaw to give a presentation. Shannon had a conflict, so unlucky for them, they got me instead. It was a very good group and a large number of people attended, including state employees, providers, Judge Marchman, DA Jones, and members of their staffs, who are all interested in the future of this initiative. A few people asked questions that I could not answer, and I promised to get those answers for them. This is the time to develop processes and we really need our staffs to get involved in the details for these future plans. All four agencies' frontline staffs in the communities, and the private, non-profit community, need to work on these processes. They are the ones who will implement the programming on the ground and will have to re-invent the processes.

On my way back to Baton Rouge, I encountered a little roadblock. For people traveling to Monroe, beware of the Sicily Island police force. They had us down to one lane, and they are checking all the paperwork: drivers licenses, insurance, concealed weapons permits, etc. I got by the checkpoint with no problem and arrived back in Baton Rouge in time to catch LSU vs. Texas A&M tonight in the Cotton Bowl. It is sure to be a nailbiter as always, and I hope we will come out ahead. The Saints meet Seattle in a playoff tomorrow and I predict we're gonna BRES through the Seahawks to get to the next level.

I hope your team wins this weekend, and, as ever, my thanks to each of you in every OJJ location, for all that you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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