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## what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I'm afraid that I have to start off by mentioning the horrible tragedy that happened today in Connecticut. I'm sure by now you have all read or heard about the terrible school shooting in a small town. A young man, 24 years old, went to the school armed with several guns, and shot his mother, who was a teacher there, then killed several other adults and 20 children. The gunman is dead as well. I cannot imagine what kind of mental anguish, pain and psychosis this young man must have had, to have taken these actions. At this point, I can only assume that there is a commonality between some of these killers and the presence of mental illness. I just think, with all these occurrences, the Aurora, Colorado shootings, the shooting this week in a mall in Oregon, the recent death of two small children in New Orleans at the hands of a mentally ill mother – the mental health system has got to take a look at how public safety can be better served, along with preserving the individual rights of the mentally ill.

Of course this event is horribly tragic - it's so sad any time of the year - but for children, right before Christmas, it's extremely tragic. Beyond comprehension. I would ask you to please pray for the families, that they are able to deal with losing family members, which is extremely difficult at any time, but especially in this tragic way, it's exponentially difficult. Hug your kids. Tell the people you love that you love them, because you do not know from day to day what's going to happen tomorrow.

It's kind of hard to talk about anything else, but we did have a busy week. More depressing news, you may have heard that the state Revenue Estimating Committee has foreshadowed another budget deficit and we are facing mid-year cuts. I don't think it's looking any better for next fiscal year either. So, folks, I don't know what to tell you, we just have to focus on what we do have and find ways to meet the mission and keep moving forward. I know you are concerned and disappointed and I feel your pain. When the going gets tough, the tough get going, and you are doing a great job. My deepest appreciation goes out to each and every one of you. That, and five cents will not even buy you a cup of coffee! Especially if you go to Starbucks. Keep doing what you're doing and just keep focused on the kids. We are their last best hope for not having lives of crime and imprisonment.

I stopped in on the Central-Southwest Regional supervisors' meeting today, coordinated by **Regional Director Johnny Qualls**. It was good seeing everybody. I got to sit in the back for a few minutes and observe. It looked like a good exchange and a good group. I think regionalization is going to be very good for us as an agency.

It's only 11 days til Christmas! I hope you can spend the weekend enjoying the decorations, and whatever your traditions are to mark the holiday season. Wishing you all a wonderful weekend, with my thanks to every one of you, in every OJJ location, for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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

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