
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Well, the holidays really are now officially over and most of us have put away the decorations and the tree...unless your Christmas tree is about to become a Mardi Gras tree because you still haven't found the time or strength to drag it all back to the attic. BTW, Mardi Gras is early this year - Feb. 12 – so we really do have another holiday to look forward to.

When I said last week that we would hit the ground running, I really meant it. I put on my running shoes and have been in meetings every day this week. We had a successful leadership retreat in Vidalia, and we had good discussions and dialogue about issues facing the agency. **Asst. Sec. Sean Hamilton** and I presented an update on regionalization, and I am happy to report that we are doing very well with that initiative. Sean reported that we can see expect to see the Columbia facility open its doors in early March, and he and his staff are working on a plan for the move. Regional break-out groups discussed a number of issues and presented to the larger group – policies and SOPs that have changed and others that need to be adjusted; communication issues around regionalization; identification of efficiencies already realized through regionalization and future improvements. We also had presentations on a number of projects and upcoming initiatives – Hammond **RM Sue Larisey** updated us on their partnership with Northshore Community College to provide education for some of our kids, and also discussed the probation policy evaluation project in Hammond. **RD Carolyn Lewis** took us through the positive changes taking place in the Shreveport FINS program. **DAS Karen Stubbs** and **RD Susan Miller** outlined an integrated regional training plan that will have new hires in both the field offices and the facilities taking some of their training sessions together. **Chief of Operations Ellyn Toney** and **RM Kelly Clement** provided an update on the SAVRY and QA issues, and **Asst. Sec. Sean Hamilton** and **DAS Karen Stubbs** rounded out the day with a discussion of the “26 Acts of Kindness” idea that arose from the tragic Newtown, Conn. school shooting, and ways for our youth to engage in restorative justice projects in line with that inspiration. Thanks to everyone who traveled in nasty weather to attend, and to **Karen Stubbs** and **Director of Staff Development Fran Martin** for taking care of logistics. If you have an interest in any of the topics we addressed, please ask your RM or RD to speak with you about them.

With all the rain we've been having, we can expect some localized flooding as well as other problems - like snakes. It's warm enough that they will be more active now and the high water will drive them out into people places. Speaking of snakes, it's been a while since we have had a good snake story in WUD, but this one's a doozy. Seems **RD Johnny Qualls** was driving along the highway outside Alexandria when he encountered a water moccasin on the road. A REALLY BIG water moccasin. As Johnny drove past the snake, it coiled up and struck the tire of his car. The bite actually caused the tire to blow out! Johnny managed to dispatch the snake and save other motorists a similar fate.

This awful weather is keeping many of us “under the weather” (now you know where the term comes from) and it looks like the weekend won't be much better. The flu is also going around, so I would advise everyone to stay as warm and dry as possible to avoid getting sick. Apparently this strain of flu is actually deadly. The vaccine is not 100% effective but it can help ease the symptoms if you do get the flu after being vaccinated. It's not too late to get the vaccination, if you can still find any. Most of the big chain pharmacies offer it, generally at no cost if you have the state health insurance plan.

I'll close now, wishing you all a good weekend, with my thanks to each and every one you, in every OJJ location, for all you do, rain or shine, to meet the mission.

Sincerely, “Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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