
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

Vol. 5, No. 29. March 8, 2013

Hello, Everyone:

There is a leadership principle that says “be technically proficient.” For people who are considering moving up in their careers, there’s always the next level of technical competence to achieve. Part of moving up the chain of command is learning how to understand and manage the agency’s budget, and being accountable for that budget. I know many of you are being challenged with learning different new skills and you are being exposed to new procedures and technical proficiencies in areas that you’ve never had to deal with before. Believe me, I understand.

We are getting ready for our budget presentation to the legislature, which is only two weeks away, and it’s totally consuming most of our administrative time right now. Our Undersecretary is busy calculating the changes in the dollar amounts and trying to ensure that the resources are where they are supposed to be. She works daily with the state budget office, while other staff are gathering information for the testimony. In those hearings, legislators may ask any number of questions and we have to be prepared to give accurate answers on anything from personnel actions, turnover, operations and construction updates, to how many cars we have in our fleet, the condition of the cars, the number of miles they have on them – an endless amount of data that we have to have at our fingertips.

I know the first time I was promoted to an assistant warden position, and had to deal with administrative issues such as budgets, I was scared to death, and honestly, I was afraid of failing, since I knew nothing about the budget. I didn’t know what went into the budget and how funds were expended. I had no idea what an encumbrance was, and frankly I didn’t care, up until the time I became responsible for it. But when I became responsible and accountable, I knew that I had to roll up my sleeves and figure it out if I was going to be successful. That’s an area that nobody really helps you with. All of a sudden you get the responsibility, and you must become technically proficient. Learning how to manage a budget for a facility of an entire office is not something you can learn to do in a one hour classroom experience.

I guess the trick is, that when you become responsible and accountable, you don’t have a choice - you have to learn it. And so, if you’re lucky enough to get good training, that’s helpful, if not, you’ve got to find other ways to learn what it is you need to know. As our jobs change and requirements are different, it comes down to being personally responsible for becoming technically proficient. I do not have to know how to be an accountant or a finance director or budget analyst, but it’s up to me to figure out what level of technical competence I do need to make sure I can present our budget – that’s not my supervisors’ responsibility, that’s mine. Believe me, I am no natural at budget issues, I have had to work at it. Being a social worker type and a people person, I naturally gravitate away from numbers. (Like the t-shirt says: “Social Worker... YOU do the math.”)

I know that you are rising to the occasion as you are taking on the new challenges that have been required of you. That’s what leaders do. We have leaders among us everywhere we look. And we depend on your leadership every day. My thanks to each of you in every office and facility for rising to the challenge and learning new skill sets as you work daily to meet the mission.

As you enjoy the weekend, don’t forget to “spring forward” as Daylight Saving Time kicks in.

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