
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

The new year certainly brought changes and the biggest topic this week has been the weather. There's a saying that if we did not talk about the weather, 9 out of 10 people would have nothing to talk about. But with record cold that paralyzed most of the country and caused problems here in Louisiana, it really was something to talk about. We are happy that all of our youth and staff made it through the record cold this week with no problems.

While much of the country was socked in, I got to travel to the frozen tundra of Washington, DC this week. With all the drama I've had in the past with air travel, I'm happy to report that the only travel or weather-related issue I had was a delay getting out of Atlanta. I spent some time serving on an expert PREA Panel for the Bureau of Justice, which conducted hearings on the status of implementation of PREA standards, and discussions of current findings on PREA reporting in juvenile and adult facilities. BOJ brought in people from states that are doing well with PREA and others that are experiencing low incidences of success with implementation. I was very pleased to have been called as an expert panelist, and I was able to talk about the creative things we have been doing throughout our system here in Louisiana.

We wrapped up the week Friday hosting the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Judges Joint Department Liaison meeting here at central office. This is a regular meeting where a group of judges and all the child-serving agencies – OJJ, DCFS, DOE and DHH - come together to discuss the issues we have in common. The main issue is how to best serve our youth in Louisiana. There's a lot going on right now, with many on-going and emerging initiatives designed to make sure that youth in our state have the tools they need to be successful, and that they are protected from the negative influences that can keep them from succeeding. We are working with DCFS on human trafficking programs that will help to protect the victims of this heinous practice. In the next year, along with the other agencies, we will also be looking at prevention and diversion programs, in areas such as gangs, delinquency prevention, suicide prevention, and mental health issues. I know you've heard us talk about our integrated case management effort with DCFS – that is chugging along, and we will be giving a report on progress and plans for implementation of that initiative to the legislature next month.

Among the topics we discussed is the fact that adolescence is too late to start looking at certain issues. The discussion ran the gamut from early childhood development, to skills needed to enter school, options for youth as they start high school and consider a career path and higher education choices. We have got to look at every aspect of a child's life - home, education, mental and physical health – as we treat the whole child and offer new resources and opportunities for families.

A lot to think about, but we are all about kids. So, I'll close with my sincere thanks for all that you do, every day and in every OJJ office and facility, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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