
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

The week started with the MacArthur Foundation Models for Change ninth annual national working conference in Washington, DC. It brought together people from all over the country, including around 25 other Louisiana officials. There were major sessions on several key topics, including a recommendation for the age 18 as the uniform age of majority in all states; transfer and prosecution of youth in the adult criminal system; use of restrictive housing in juvenile justice settings; safeguarding confidentiality; use of shackles and restraints on youth in the courtroom, and registration of youth who commit sexual offenses. There was also a recommendation by one of the speakers to create a category called “youthful offenders” that will cover people between the ages of 18 -25, based on research on the brain development of young people. We will be hearing a lot about all of these issues in the coming year, so stay tuned.

The Institute for Public Health and Justice housed at LSUHSC, headed by Dr. Stephen Phillipi, will be scheduling a series of consensus-building meetings around the state, beginning early next year. There will be 3 – 5 regional meetings that will bring together key juvenile justice stakeholders and partners to get input on priorities for systemic juvenile justice reform for the next 10 years. These will be important meetings, and a number of our regional office staff will be participating.

This is the time of year that the state budget is being discussed, and work is being done on budget preparation. I’m sure everyone has read in the news that the state is looking at another deficit. We won’t know what our budget situation will be until the end of January. In the meantime we will focus on meeting our mission, getting the job done and finding that balance in our lives that we all seek.

This is also the time of year that all of our facilities and offices have a little celebration, and at the central office luncheon today I realized how lucky we really are. I was struck by what a great group of people we have, people who work so well together for the common good of our agency. I know this is true of all our work units across the state, and that people around the agency feel the same way about their co-workers and colleagues. We may not make the most money, and we may not have the best vehicles (or enough of them), and we may not be rich and famous, but we are truly blessed to have such an important mission, and we are privileged to be in a position to help so many.

So, my heartfelt and sincere thanks to each and every member of the OJJ family, wherever you work, in every office and facility, for all you do, day in and day out, to meet the mission. Let’s remember that many of our colleagues will be at work during the holidays, taking care of our young people in secure care. This is a rough time of year for anyone who is away from home, and our staff who will be on duty will not only be away from their families, but will be doing their best to make the kids’ holidays as pleasant as possible.

I’ll take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderful Christmas, with the hope that you will be surrounded by family and friends. AND a happy and safe New Year, because this will be the last WUD this year. WUD will return on January 9.

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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