

# what's up doc?

by Dr. Mary Livers, PH.D, MSW, Deputy Secretary

Vol. 8, No. 45, December 10, 2015

Hello, Everyone:

This week, I got to spend a few hours with a group of concerned community members in Lafayette discussing an issue that is truly universal – addressing the mental health needs of citizens. The problem is currently one that every level of government - local, state and federal are battling.

This group in Lafayette was focused on finding immediate and direct ways to get folks within their community treatment to keep them from moving into mental distress, which is often followed by homelessness and incarceration. They are searching for a better way to provide public and personal safety for citizens. The community gathering of mental health, jail, and corrections professionals is the first step in creating a revised, reformed system of care that will address the needs of the mentally ill, and avoid unnecessary and costly incarceration.

The state is also attempting to address this issue in unique ways. I know that most of you working in the field are aware of the changes that we have had in Louisiana over the past three years with the establishment of the Louisiana Behavioral Health Partnership (LBHP) and Coordinated System of Care (CSOC). These two programs were intended to bring state agencies out of their silos when it comes to meeting the behavioral health needs of children and adults. As of December 1, 2015, the system faced further consolidation into the physical health arena when management of behavioral health services was merged into the managed care organizations behind the five Bayou Health Plans. While progress has been made, we are all still trying to work out the kinks and wrinkles in this model of service delivery. I appreciate the time and energy that you all have put in making sure our young people get the services that they need.

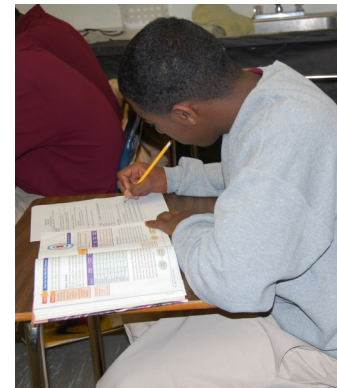
Providing better services for people with mental illness in the community is a much more humane and efficient model that produces better outcomes than what we are currently doing. Last month, I was able to deliver a keynote speech on this very topic to a national audience. This is not a new problem, its origins can be traced by through the last 200 years. On a federal level, legislation and policy have changed to try to address it, but we still have not gotten it right.

I want to encourage all of you here at OJJ to be mindful of the conversations on this topic whether it be in your regional office or facility or local community. Our agency and other correctional agencies have become the agency of last resort for some mentally ill young people and adults. It is important that we find a more humane, efficient way to produce better outcomes for the mentally ill in our care and truly become part of the solution.

I'll close with my sincere thanks to every member of the OJJ team, wherever you serve, for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc"

*Dr. Mary Livers*



Comments?  
Send them to  
Whatsupdoc?  
OJJ@la.gov