

# what's up doc?

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

Vol. 8, No.15, April 24, 2015

Hello, Everyone:

I've been watching the events in Baltimore City with great interest. As you may remember, I lived there for several years, in an area called Towson, just north of the city limits of Baltimore. I can tell you, Baltimore is a very interesting place, very unique. And just like other major cities in America, it has its problems. There is an inner city that has been abandoned by a lot of people who have moved to the suburbs, leaving behind the older part of the city with a significant population plagued with high unemployment, living in poverty and attending underperforming schools. As a result, there is a significant amount of anger, resentment, and, unfortunately, too few constructive opportunities for young people. I think we can all empathize with how difficult these issues are to solve. We've seen these clashes between residents and police in too many communities throughout the country recently.

This is a great challenge for the leaders in our communities, our law enforcement personnel, our courts, our schools—and all of these things are a strong indication that change is needed throughout our country. I think we can recognize that fact with the youth who come into the Louisiana juvenile justice system. They need better alternatives, better educational and employment opportunities. They need hope. And while no one chooses to be placed in state custody, I am confident that the majority of youth we serve return to their communities with better coping skills than when they arrived, thanks to the work you do in every office and facility. I am proud that we are part of the solution, not the problem.

How about that storm Monday? Central office was hunkered down in the library to stay away from the windows, due to a tornado warning and the trees snapping in the wind. It was dark as night at mid-morning. Everyone's cell phones were blaring weather alerts. We had power outages in several locations, not to mention many people's homes. When the storm system passed, Asst. Secretary Sean Hamilton made sure that all our facilities and regional offices came through alright. We chalked up the exercise to meeting the ACA safety standard. We had some additional practice in that area with a fire drill first thing Thursday morning.

We had a productive meeting this week with members of the Louisiana Chapel Prison Foundation, a group that helps to fund and build chapels at prison facilities. This is their first experience with the juvenile system, and we are in the exploratory phase as they work to adapt their adult prison model to partnering with us to build a chapel at the Acadiana facility. We hope that we can host another meeting with the group at Bridge City this summer, to continue our discussions.

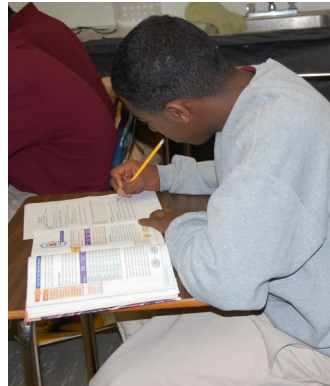
The FBI also came to central office this week. But don't worry, we didn't do anything wrong. Katina Broden, our Deputy Administrator for the Interstate Compact on Juveniles, conducted a training session this week for victim specialists for the FBI and federal Homeland Security. Katina works with these agencies regularly to care for victims of human trafficking. Katina was able to teach the agents how the ICJ is coordinated among all the states.

Next week is Employee Appreciation Week, and I hope to see many of you as I travel around the state to attend recognition events.

Wishing you all a wonderful weekend, with my sincere thanks and appreciation to every member of the OJJ family, in every office and facility, for all you do, every day, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*



Comments?  
Send them to  
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