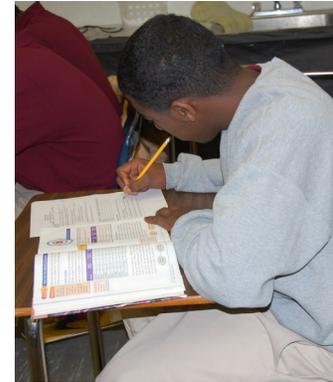


what's up doc?

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

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Hello, Everyone:

I hope by now you are aware of what is happening in our state with the budget situation. Basically, it is really, really bad, and I am not kidding. This is very serious. It is a time to be concerned, but I do not believe it is time to panic yet. This is not over until the fat lady sings (or specifically when our legislature adjourns in early June) .

On Monday, I will be presenting a budget proposal based upon a 63% cut per the direction of the administration. This amounts to a reduction in our budget request for next year by \$75 million dollars. This is on top of the 38% that has been cut from our budget in the past seven years. I know that it is obvious to you all that we have been operating with limited resources and there is no “fat” or money to spare right now. In fact, we are facing a budget shortfall this year, and are asking for supplemental funds to close out the current fiscal year. So, the bottom line is that if we cut anymore, we are now going to have to cut services. Everywhere. Not in any one place, but everywhere.

Without more money coming into the state (revenue brought in by taxes), we will have to operate on \$44 million dollars. I will have to present what this does to OJJ and what recommendations we have to make to operate on \$44 million dollars. It is not a pretty picture to paint. It is not what we want to do. But without the increased revenues, we are facing this kind of cut. Drastic. Ugly. And not what we think are the best practices for our young people who are in the justice system.

Please know that you are all valued for what you do. No one entity or unit is valued more than another. Our recommendations on how these cuts would be done is based upon public safety first. What we present on Monday is not what we think (and hope) is the final word. The next three weeks are critical to our future. There will be a lot of discussion and back and forth. This challenge is unprecedented in our state.

As the Governor said in his speech, we as citizens, need to bite the proverbial bullet and encourage our legislators to vote for tax increases, or determine what kind of services we can do without. There are no good choices at this point. That’s where we are. I urge you to ask yourself which one of these approaches do you support. Whatever you decide, make your voice heard. Contact your legislators. That’s why they were elected. To serve the people they represent. Let them know how you want them to vote. They will listen to you.

I will have a lot on my mind this weekend. My mind is heavy with concern for our young people, our staff, and the state of Louisiana. I keep going back to the advice that I have given staff faced with difficult decisions - go back to the mission. Juvenile justice has come so far in Louisiana in the last 10 years, I hate to see progress lost. I think that I will search for distractions this weekend - spending extra time working in my yard, or in the gym this weekend. Mindless, hard work can be therapeutic. I will remain hopeful and pray that we do not have to take these cuts.

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
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