

what's up doc?

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

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Hello, Everyone:

Well this has been quite a week. I don't know if you even noticed or not, but last week, there was no WUD. Our week was interrupted by unbelievable rain fall, and emergency closings of roads, and offices, and hours and hours of emergency preparedness all over the state, including OJJ. Of course, we all know that the most unbelievable storm slowly crossed over North Louisiana dumping 29 plus inches of rain in Shreveport and Monroe, flooding homes, and streets, roads, highways, and rivers. Later the floods appeared in south Louisiana, mainly around the Hammond area. Unfortunately, other areas like Alexandria are now being affected because of rising rivers.

I am very proud of Team OJJ who came together to get prepared for the worst. That is what we do, prepare for the worst, and hope for the best. We are fortunate that we have not had to activate an evacuation plan for Swanson Center for Youth, or Columbia. For a minute, we thought Bridge City was going to be a concern as well, but lucky for all of us, that was ruled out very quickly. SCY and Columbia were the center stage for possible evacuation. Countless hours were put in by staff to get the youth prepared, notify parents, secure space for the move, and secure buses for transportation. It was a team effort, but our hats are off to the staff at Swanson and our staff in the Northern part of the state, as they were living with this tragedy, and their own losses, and making sure our young people were safe and out of harms way. OJJ, we have a lot to be proud of. Great job Team, under terrible circumstances.

We have 26+ staff that have been impacted by the flooding just in the Monroe area alone. Most have lost their homes. Mr. Hamilton, RD Lewis, Director Richardson and myself took a short tour of the impacted area of Monroe on Wednesday. It was heartbreaking. Going down those streets, looked very much like the flooding we saw in New Orleans after Katrina. Devastation everywhere. OJJ has always been a very caring group of folks. I asking the Regional Directors to coordinate fund raising to help our staff. I know they need and would appreciate our support. Whatever you can do I know would be appreciated.

Now I need to update you on our budget situation. As you might have heard, the projected deficit for this year's budget (from now until the June 30th) is short by approximately 70 million dollars. I know that the Governor Edwards and Commissioner Dardenne are working tirelessly to find a solution. We should all appreciate their efforts to do this to keep us from having to make more cuts before the end of June. As you know, all spending is on hold, and we are trying to maintain our current level of service for the remainder of the year without having to initiate the reduced work week option. We are hoping that we can avoid this at all costs. So far, we have not been instructed to take these drastic measures.

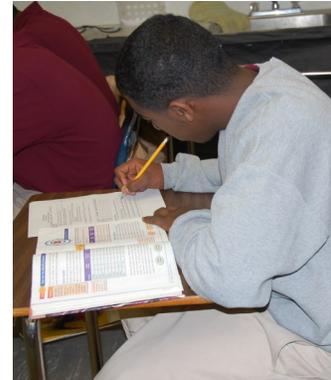
In the meantime, we still do not know what the FY17 budget will look like. We had a meeting earlier this week, and have been asked for some estimates. We have provided the information as requested and are waiting for direction. More revenue must be raised to prevent drastic changes to the services and programs that OJJ currently offers. We will let you know as soon as we know how the budget shortfall for FY 17 will impact our plans going forward.

I am sorry to be "Debbie Downer." But this is the state we are in, and to try to paint a rosy picture would not be responsible of me as a leader. That said, let's try to remain positive, count our blessings, take care of our mission.

All the best to each one of you. 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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