



**CHILDREN'S CABINET BOARD MEETING**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**March 6, 2018**  
**Capitol Press Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor**

**Cabinet Members/Representatives Attendees:**

Dr. James Bueche Jr., Office of Juvenile Justice Deputy Secretary  
Judge Desiree Cook Calvin  
Marketa Walters, Secretary, Department of Children and Family Services  
Ava Dejoie, Secretary, Louisiana Workforce Commission (Represented by Shannon Joseph)  
Commissioner of Administration, John L."Jay" Dardenne Jr. (Represented by Marsha Shuler)  
Dr. Rebekah Gee, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Health  
John C. White, Superintendent of Education (Represented by Jenna Conway)  
Kathy Edmonston, Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Sherry Guarisco, Children's Cabinet Advisory Board Chair  
Dr. Dana Hunter, Children's Cabinet Executive Director

**Cabinet Members Absent:**

Representative Barbara W. Carpenter  
Representative Yvonne Colomb  
Donald Pierson, Jr., Secretary Louisiana Economic Development

**Staff:**

Michele M. Rabalais, Executive Assistant

**Call to Order:**

Dr. Dana Hunter, Executive Director, called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests to the March 6<sup>th</sup> Children's Cabinet Board Meeting.

**Roll Call:**

Roll call following the call to order by Dr. Hunter was conducted by Michele M. Rabalais.

**Opening Remarks:** First Lady Donna Edwards provided the opening remarks. The First Lady welcomed Cabinet Members and thanked cabinet members for their hard work and participation.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Dr. Hunter, Children's Cabinet Executive Director, called for a review of the minutes and agenda. Deputy Secretary OJJ, Dr. James Bueche, Jr. made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Secretary Marketa Walters seconded the motion. Motion approved.

**Highlight: Children's Cabinet Initiatives:** Dr. Dana Hunter presented an update on Children's Cabinet Initiatives.

- a.) **No Kid Hungry Louisiana – Phase II:** Dr. Hunter reported on the No Kid Hungry program. The original goal was to reach 100 schools but the state now has 306 schools participating in the No Kid Hungry Louisiana Program. Dr. Hunter also said that in the month of October an additional 147,789 meals were distributed to students. Discussion followed.
- b.) **School Breakfast Challenge Winners:** Dr. Hunter reported that the winners of the School Breakfast Challenge were North Corbin Junior High and French Settlement High School. Both schools had nearly a 60% increase in school breakfast participation. In addition both schools will receive a cash award as well as an NFL pep-rally. Secretary Walters requested information as to whether or not there is a way to track if these children were being fed before. Livingston parish adopted Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) which allows all students to eat regardless of income.

In addition to the two state winners there were five regional winners: Region 1: North DeSoto (DeSoto parish) had a 14% increase; Region 2: Colfax (Grant parish) had a 31% increase; Region 3: Iota (Acadia parish) had a 20% increase; Region 4: Village East (Terrebonne parish) had a 28% increase and Region 5: North Corbin (Livingston parish) had a 60% increase. Dr. Hunter also informed the Board that teachers have reported that the breakfast meals are making a difference and that the children are more focused and they are performing better. Discussion followed.

Dr. Hunter stated that the week of March 5<sup>th</sup> has been declared School Breakfast Week in Louisiana. The Governor and First Lady will be at North Corbin Junior High on March 7<sup>th</sup> to declare the winners of the school breakfast challenge.

No Kid Hungry in partnership with Share Our Strength has released a funding opportunity to award \$70,000 to Louisiana schools for breakfast equipment and whatever is needed to make sure that all children receive a healthy breakfast. Any school in Louisiana is eligible to apply.

Dr. Hunter is also working on a partnership between Wal-Mart and food banks throughout the state. Wal-Mart has a fight hunger, spark change initiative that strives to bring attention and to highlight the importance of food banks around the country. Working with food banks to provide back packs for children in need. In addition Dr. Hunter reported that she is working with the food bank in Tallulah to provide food and water to children during the summer.

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's) are being approached to act as meal sponsors. All meals they distribute can be reimbursed by the USDA. Dr. Rebekah Gee reported that she would like local health units to participate. Discussion followed.

- c.) **Finale: Regional Human Trafficking Summits:** Dr. Dana Hunter informed the Cabinet that 6 of the 9 Human Trafficking Summits have now been completed. Houma had 65 participants, Hammond had over 100. New Orleans has over 100 people pre-registered, Lake Charles has 80 pre-registered and Lafayette has 55 pre-registered. Attendees included state Senators, Mayors, Judges, Police Chiefs, University Provosts, Hospital CEO's, service providers, law enforcement and students. Louisiana will be used as a model as we have the only state to have all regions included. Discussion followed.

**Louisiana Fosters' Initiative:** First Lady Donna Edwards and DCFS Secretary Marketa Garner Walters spoke on the Louisiana Fosters' Initiative.

First Lady Donna Edwards spoke on the Blessings in a Backpack program which services New Orleans and provides needy children with a back-pack that contains enough non-perishable food for the weekend.

The goal of Louisiana Fosters' is to mobilize, encourage and inspire faith, nonprofit, business and service communities to partner with government to bolster the support for foster children and their caregivers in Louisiana. First Lady Edwards reported that a meeting regarding the next 'give' is scheduled for March 14. First Lady Edwards along with Kim Carver, Madeline Landrieu and Secretary Walters and others will discuss the next steps in raising money and using the money that is available. The First Lady has been taking gift cards received to foster parents to help out with costs that the foster parents incur when taking in children.

DCFS Secretary Marketa Walters reported on the following initiatives that have begun since the beginning of Louisiana Fosters'. These initiatives include but are not limited to the following:

Happy Little Trees Acadiana Art Center – offers free art lessons to foster children in the Lafayette area.

There is a provider in New Orleans that offers solar panels at a discount to foster families.

Methodist Health held a pastors luncheon in which pastors were taught how to recruit foster families through their church.

Open Table – One in Monroe and one in Baton Rouge where 12 people in each congregation come to support youth aging out of foster care with 5 other churches in Monroe that are considering opening, one in Baton Rouge and 3 other churches looking at joining. Louisiana is the first state to consider doing this as a statewide initiative.

Bread or Stones is hosting community meetings to see how they can support youth aging out of foster care.

For more information regarding the initiatives through Louisiana Fosters' you can visit their web-site at <http://www.louisianafosters.la.gov>.

**Brief Update Quality Parenting Initiative:** Secretary Marketa Walters spoke regarding the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI). Secretary Walters informed the Cabinet that the National QPI Conference was held in New Orleans in January that was opened by First Lady Edwards. The conference was to show where each state stood in regards to QPI. Louisiana is the first state to do this as a statewide initiative and is offering a new way of how foster care is done. Louisiana is now asking foster parents to work with birth parents. Foster parents are now asked to phone the birth parents of the children in their care to let them know what is going on with their children. During the first five days the foster parent will meet with the birth parent(s) and worker to discuss the child and the child's likes and dislikes etc. The transition period is a difficult time and movements are hard on children and the foster parents are asked to be more thoughtful and attentive. 65-67% of all children in foster care are returned to their biological parents. QPI helps to make this a much easier transition. The foster parent acts as a bridge between the birth parent and the child. Discussion followed.

**Brief Update Early Childhood Priorities:** Michelle Aletto, LDH Deputy Secretary, presented the update on Early Childhood Priorities. Ms. Aletto was charged with coming up with recommendations for the department. These recommendations include the following:

- a.) Develop and finalize an early childhood master plan that would include partners outside of the health department that would promote best practices and develop priorities that would work
- b.) Identify and secure funding to pilot a comprehensive and coordinated system similar to the ECSS (Early Childhood Support and Services) program.

The main vision of the work-group set forth is to set up a plan for development of children and their families where services are available locally, they are coordinated, they are comprehensive across systems with a focus on social, emotional and behavioral health of infants and children.

The work group members, as per the Governor's request are researching the cost to implement the program. Some of the statewide issues being looked at are educating parents and caregivers about health issues such as social and emotional bonding with infants and ways that screening for mental health issues can be included in well-child visits. Dr. Rebekah Gee is also in talks with national leaders in the obstetrics and gynecology field to discuss that during prenatal care that the doctors talk with the expectant mothers and find out if services and supports are needed for the expectant parent. Discussion followed.

**Child Well-Being Initiatives:** Dr. James Bueche, Jr. stated that he and members of his staff recently had the opportunity to visit Metanoia House and was very impressed with the program. As of this date he reported that his office has made two referrals to the program. An effort is being made to get more young women that are being trafficked into the program.

It was also stated that Valentine's Day cards were distributed to all incarcerated youth and Easter candy will also be distributed.

Shannon Joseph from the Louisiana Work Force Commission reported that the Work Force Commission has been very active in the JAG program and has just started an after-school JAG program for drop outs giving students help and needed services. In addition the Work Force Commission has been working with Ochsner Health Services to find out who is need of services and help them with training and employment with entry level positions.

A Workforce Summit is scheduled to be held in New Orleans on March 21st-23<sup>rd</sup>. This is a chance to make sure people are aware of all of the services provided by the Workforce Commission. The United States Secretary of Labor, R. Alexander Acosta along with Governor Edwards will be attending the Summit on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Discussion followed.

**Bills for the 2018 Regular Session:** Secretary Marketa Walters informed the Cabinet about the following proposed bills for the 2018 Session:

- a.) Study resolution to extend foster care past the age of 18
- b.) Bill that would allow youth who have aged out of foster care to voluntarily let their contact information be released if youth signs a waiver to allow to DCFS to release that information.
- c.) Bill reauthorizing DCFS in accordance with the sunset law.
- d.) In addition, there are six bills regarding child abuse six bills regarding support enforcement.

Other bills discussed include the following:

- a.) Equal pay for women and an increase in the minimum wage
- b.) Workforce Commission – sunset bill and bill to change names to the Department of Labor
- c.) Education – bill that would create a commission to look at early childhood education
- d.) Bill to delay implementation of Raise the Age

Judge Desiree Cook-Calvin said that New Orleans has started a pilot program where ore school-based intervention is being done in an effort to decrease the number of children going into the prison system.

Sherry Guarisco requested that the members of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board be provided with a list of all legislation that involves Cabinet Members.

Marsha Shuler requested that Cabinet members also get a list of bills that agencies consider “bad” or those that should be closely watched for impact on children – not just those that agencies are pushing. Discussion followed.

**Schedule of the 2018 Meetings:**

Tuesday, March 6, 2018 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	State Capitol Press Room 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor
Tuesday, July 17, 2018 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	State Capitol Press Room 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor
Tuesday, September 11, 2018 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	State Capitol Press Room 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor
Tuesday, November 6, 2018 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	State Capitol Press Room 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor

**Other Business:** Sherry Guarisco informed the Cabinet that the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families will be holding regional meetings with funding from the Children’s Trust Fund. The meetings will help inform the public about the impact of state government in each region. The next meeting is scheduled for March 6 at 2:00 p.m. at the Bluebonnet Library.

**Public Comments:** The Louisiana Parenting Education Network will be hosting ‘Strong Families, Strong Communities The Power of Positive Relationships 2018’ Annual LAPEN Summit for Parenting Educators on April 17th in Lafayette.

Susan East-Nelson introduced herself to the Cabinet. Ms. Nelson has been hired as the new Executive Director for the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families.

Melanie Bronfin with the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children reported on the ‘Ready Louisiana’ Coalition that has a statement and support for increased investment in early childhood education. In addition Ms. Bronfin reported that the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce will be holding an Early Education Day at the Capitol on March 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment:** Dr. James Bueche, Jr. made a motion to adjourn. CCAB Chair, Sherry Guarisco seconded the motion. All approved. Motion carried and meeting adjourned.

**Next meeting:** July 17, 2018  
*Claiborne Building, Room #1-155*