

**Child**r**en’s Cabinet Advisory Board Meeting**

**Unapproved Minutes**

**March 15, 2022**

**Zoom Meeting**

**Member Name: Attendees**

R. Renee Antoine

Juanita Carruth

Kathy Coleman

Jill Dyason

Annette Fruge

Julio Galan

Eric Griggs, M.D.

Julie Foster Hagan

Sarah Hinshaw-Fusilier

Rhenda H. Hodnett

Kimberly Hood

Shavana Howard

Ronald Johnson

Susan East Nelson

Ashley Politz

Kathleen Stewart Richey

Kate Shipley

Marsha E. Shuler

Ernise Singleton

Libbie Sonnier

Stephanie Sterling

Karen Stubbs

Alishia R. Vallien

Gina B. Womack

Lenell Y. Young

***Proxies Present:***

*Courtney Robins/Teresa Falgoust*

**Staff:**

Dr. Melanie Washington, Children’s Cabinet Executive Director

Michele M. Rabalais, Children’s Cabinet Executive Assistant

**Welcome and Call to Order**:

Susan East-Nelson, Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board (CCAB) Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed all present at 10:08 a.m. to the CCAB Meeting as well as the Children’s Day at the Capitol.

**Roll Call:**

Michele M. Rabalais, Executive Assistant, called roll.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Alishia Vallien made a motion to approve the January 11, 2022 minutes and the motion included that the spelling Michael Victorian’s name be corrected. Ashley Politz seconded the amended motion. All approved. Motion carried.

**Children and Youth Planning Boards/ Juvenile Justice Reform Act Implementation Commission:** Gina Womack presented the Children and Youth Planning Boards/ Juvenile Justice Reform Act Implementation Commission: update.

Ms. Womack is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Families and Friends of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children.

Act 1225 changed legislation around public welfare assistance, education and criminal justice. Because of this legislation, the Juvenile Justice Partnership Act was created and new policies and practices were implemented. Act 1225 caused the closure of the country’s worst juvenile prison of the time, the Tallulah Center for Youth. The funding that was to be saved from the closure of Tallulah was supposed to go into community-based alternatives but this did not happen.

Current law created the Children and Youth Planning Boards. These Boards were intended to work at the local level to assess, align, coordinate and monitor all available programs and services to address the needs of children and youth in the state. These Boards were to be placed under the Children’s Cabinet, which would facilitate, offer guidance and technical assistance. These were unfunded mandates. Discussion followed.

**Legislative Session Overview:**

**Louisiana Department of Health:** Mark Thomas, LDH Deputy Secretary, presented the legislative report on LDH legislation.

* Office of Women’s Health: In 2021, Senator Barrow proposed SB 133, which called on the department to do an assessment of women’s services across all LDH departments. LDH has since completed the report and it has been sent to legislature. Since that time, LDH has decided to move forward with legislation for the Office of Women’s Health. The bill would lead to the coordination of efforts for women’s health. The effort would include looking at women’s health needs throughout their lifespan to include diseases that significantly affect women, access to health care, the impact of poverty on women’s health, the leading causes of morbidity and mortality, and health disparities for women. A fiscal note is being prepared to estimate the cost of establishing an office with an assistant secretary and potentially four and five staffers.

Karen Stubbs reported on behalf of the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH). Ms. Stubbs reported on the following legislation that OBH is following/proposing:

* HB 334 – Peer Support Specialist: Bill would waive some criminal backgrounds. OPH is asking for waivers if the conviction has been at least five (5) years since release from probation, parole, supervision or jail; theft under $500, distribution or possession of controlled/dangerous substances.
* HB 212: Fentanyl test strips would be excluded from the definition of drug paraphernalia.

Julie Foster-Hagan presented the legislative report on Office of Developmental Disabilities:

* Increasing funding for EarlySteps. There has been a 10% increase but the office is hoping for an increase of 20%.
* Updating contracts for single point of entry. The agency does expect an increase in costs for the EarlySteps Program.
* Roll out of Act 421 TEFRA Program on January 1st. The program should be fully implemented. There are families of children with disabilities that have a certain income level that makes them ineligible for Medicaid. Under the change, the children become Medicaid eligible. The program was able to get additional funding through the American Rescue Plan. There is not a waiting list for this service at this time. So far, there has been approximately 438 applications.

**Louisiana Department of Education:** Ethan Melancon, Department of Education, reported the following:

* The Department of Education is tracking over 160 bills that affect either education, the Department of Education, or Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Most of the bills deal with the following:
  + Teacher recruitment & retention
  + Literacy
  + On-going Covid recovery due for learning loss that occurred during the pandemic
  + Teacher pay raises
* HB 22 this bill would allow retirees to be rehired that would change the level a retiree could make when returning to the classroom from 25 to 50%. This would only apply to teachers who retired prior to January 2021. The bill would have a three-year sunset.
* HB 156 which would allow for criminal background checks for teachers
* HB 388 provides relative to the certification and evaluation of teachers
* HB 346 aims at awarding scholarships to 25 students a year in teacher preparation programs at postsecondary institutions that are approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.
* HB 207 which would require Geometry or intro to Geometry as a require course for students going into a career technical education pathway.
* Early Childhood Education
  + $43 million has been placed in the budget
  + $50 million has been budgeted in the incentive fund. The incentive fund was created in 2017 to encourage local efforts to fund early childhood centers by providing state matching funds. Discussion followed.

**Department of Children and Family Services:** Shavana Howard, Office of Family Support,reported the following:

* SB184: Proposed law changes the termination of eligibility time limit in present law from 24 months to the federal rule of 60 months for FITAP.
* Streamlining all processes and hiring new workers
* Creating training and training clients with skills needed in order to gain employment

Rhenda Hodnett reported that DCFS is working with the Governor’s Office on one bill regarding rules of evidence in hearings. As of this date, the bill had not yet been filed.

**Office of Juvenile Justice: No report**

**Louisiana Workforce Commission: No report**

**Susan East Nelson, CCAB Chair:** Susan East-Nelson will send out tracking and information about bills effecting children and families as well as copies of the presentations made at the March 15th CCAB Meeting.

Ms. Nelson reported that Louisiana Early Childhood Supports and Services (ECSS) has requested $10 million a year for three years through ARPA funds for mental health services for families.

Cindy Bishop reported on behalf of the Childcare Centers regarding SB 47 by Senator Cleo Fields. The bill would mandate three (3) year olds to attend pre-K. The Childcare Association feels that this would be detrimental to preschoolers and childcare agencies. The Childcare Association feels that all children should be in age appropriate and developmentally appropriate childcare settings. Discussion followed.

**Louisiana Crisis System Update:** Danny Mintz, Director of Safety and Policy for the Louisiana Budget Project, reported on the following bills:

* HB 396 would put time limits on SNAP recipients. This could affect non-custodial parents and could have a direct impact on child.
* SB 259, which would include new reporting requirements focusing on fraud and program violations in public benefits programs. In January alone approximately 78,000 people lost benefits due to paperwork issues.
* The Louisiana Budget Project is also working on a bill related to hunger amongst college students especially youth aging out of foster care. Discussion followed.

SB 170 which provides for the Council on the State Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect (SCR council) as a subcommittee of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board to study and make recommendations to the Children's Cabinet and legislature on state central registry reform was also discussed.

Ashley Politz with the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics reported that it is tracking bills dealing with the following areas:

* Tracking vaccines bills
* Transgender bills
* Cap in insulin prices

Danny Mintz also reported on the following:

* HB 311 which would establish an increase in the state minimum wage rate
* HB 472 which would establish an increase in the state minimum wage rate for tipped employees
* HB 506 which provides for an increase in the minimum amount of the unemployment compensation weekly benefit amount from $10 to $50 a week.

Kate Shipley provided information regarding HB 64, which would raise the age of youth who can provide videotaped statements for certain offenses from 17 to 18 years of age.

**Acknowledgement of Public and Public Comments:**

Renee Antoine formerly representing March of Dimes has moved to the Governor’s Office of Women’s Policy and will now be representing that office.

Children’s Day at the Capitol is being held and all are invited to attend.

A list of upcoming events will be compiled by the Executive Director and sent out to all CCAB Members and interested parties.

**Upcoming CCAB meetings:**

June 28, 2022 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

September 13, 2022 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

November 15, 2022 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Adjourn:** Julio Galan made a motion to adjourn. Ashley Politz seconded the motion. All approved. Motion adjourned.