

**Children’s Cabinet Meeting**

**Unapproved Minutes**

**April 8, 2024**

**Members Present**

Kenneth “Kenny” Loftin, Office of Juvenile Justice

ReShonn Saul, Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board

Secretary Susana Schowen, Louisiana Workforce Commission

**Representatives Present (Not included in Quorum)**

Sabre Masters, representing Superintendent of Education, Dr. Cade Brumley

Drew Maranto representing Secretary Dr. Ralph Abraham, Louisiana Department of Health

Toby Comeaux, representing Secretary David Matlock, Department of Children and Family Services

**Special Guests**

Governor Jeff Landry

Dr. Libbie Sonnier

**Staff:**

Jolie Williamson, Children’s Cabinet Executive Director

Michele Rabalais, LCTF/CC Exec. Assistant

**Call to Order**:

Jolie Williamson, Executive Director, called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and introductions were made.

**Roll Call:**

Michele M. Rabalais, Executive Assistant, called roll.

**Approval of Minutes**: Quorum not present.

**Louisiana Children’s Trust Fund (LCTF) Grant Recommendations:**

Ursula Anderson, LCTF Executive Director, presented the LCTF Grant Recommendations. A copy of the report was distributed to Children’s Cabinet Members.

The LCTF Board is recommending funding for 65 applications received at a total of $1,373,750. The Committee also recommends that 9 Event/Conference applications be funded at a total of $144,985. The total of funding recommended is $1,518,735. Discussion followed.

**Introduction of Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry:** Jolie Williamson welcomed and introduced Governor Jeff Landry to the Cabinet.

Governor Landry stated that there is a new administration with new opportunities. Part of his administration’s focus will be om juvenile crime prevention, the mental health crisis in children and more education of human trafficking particularly in schools. Discussion followed.

**CCAB Update/Budget Priority Recommendations:** ReShonn Saul, CCAB Chair, was presented information on the Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board.

Every year CCAB picks something to focus on to better help and improve the lives of children and families in the state. One item that hasn’t been focused on in the last several years is the Children and Youth Planning Board(s) (CYPB) that came about due to act 555 during the Juvenile Justice Reform Act.

Act 555 further authorized local CYPB’s to assist in the development, implementation, and operation of services which encourage positive development, diversion of children and youth from the criminal justice and foster care system, reduction in the commitments of youth to state institutions, and providing community response to the growing rate of juvenile delinquency. The coordination and implementation of services shall include, but are not limited to prevention, early intervention, diversion, alternatives to home displacement, alternatives to incarceration and treatment services. Through such boards, the state intends to foster and promote a continuum of community-based services and systems reflecting service integration at the state and community or local levels.

The CYPB’s are an unmandated law and currently no funds are available. Currently the only areas with active CYPB’s are: New Orleans, New Iberia, Calcasieu and Jefferson.

CCAB recently created a work group to identify the gaps that are in the statute to see if anything should be changed. Possible changes include the following: funding, and possibly the location of the office (who governs these groups).

One success of CCAB has been securing funds for Early Childhood Mental Health Services for children ages 0-5.

CCAB also continues to work closely with 2-1-1 to make sure that they have the necessary resources. Discussion followed.

In addition, Ms. Saul discussed the Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board budget priorities. A copy of the budget priorities will be sent to the Governor. CCAB must submit budget priorities annually to the Children’s Cabinet. These recommendations include the following:

Behavioral Health – The committee continues to concentrate on a Medicaid state plan amendment which will make it easier for schools to participate in Medicaid in schools program. This will make it easier for schools to participate in the Medicaid in schools program to get health care and behavioral health care to the youth in schools.

Vulnerable Youth: Last year a Vulnerable Youth Summit was held with much success. It was also stated that Louisiana leads the nation in reducing truancy through after school programs. One week in OJJ costs the same per child for a year of after school programs.

Family Stability: No Child Hungry. More SNAP benefits are needed for children living with grandparents.

The Early Childhood Supports & Services (ECSS) Program is a State program managed by the Department of Health and Hospital, Office of Behavioral Health.  ECSS provides a coordinated system of screening, evaluation and referral services and treatment for children ages birth through 5 years and their families. Essentially a prevention and intervention program, its elements include local, integrated and comprehensive systems of care for young children and healthy development along with school readiness.

These comprehensive services help promote a positive environment for learning, growth and relationship building. Discussion followed.

**Geaux Far Louisiana:** Dr. Libbie Sonnier, Executive Director of the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, and Co-Chair of Geaux Far Louisiana presented information regarding Geaux Far Louisiana. Geaux Far Louisiana believes in an equitable, unified early childhood system centering racial equity and ensuring families access to seamless, high-quality early child development, health, and educational services.

Geaux Far Louisiana identified five goals to create an equitable, unified, child- and family-centered early childhood system that centers racial equity and ensures families have access to seamless, high-quality early childhood development, health, and educational services.

The Geaux Far Steering Committee Contains36 members**.** 55% of them being parents or early childhood education & health providers. Engagement with these key stakeholders is leading the creation, advocacy, and maintenance of the unified, statewide plan. In our first year, the Steering Committee has been engaging in meetings, planning sessions, and surveys.

The Geaux Far Goal Areas are as follows:

A Family and Provider Driven System: Families and providers are engaged and prioritized in leadership and decision-making throughout the state’s early childhood system.

\*Formal Decision-Making Structures

\*Effective Government-Family-Provider Partnerships

\*Early Childhood Leadership

A Net That Works: All families have access to an inclusive, caring, well-coordinated network that helps them meet their basic needs and support child development.

\*Informed, Supported Families

\*Accessible, Coordinated Systems

A Healthy Start: All families receive family-centered, comprehensive, whole-person physical and mental health care from pregnancy, through the early childhood years, and beyond.

\*Universal Health Care Access and Availability

\*Support for Parents Through the Early Years

\*Improved Quality of Health Care and Providers

Child Care for Everybody, Everywhere: All families have equitable access to affordable high-quality early care and education that is well-funded and responsive to the needs of families, children, and the educators and providers who make it possible.

\*More Affordable, Responsive Child Care Options

\*High Quality Early Learning Programs

\*Competitively-Compensated Early Care and Education Workforce

Family Friendly Workplaces: All employers in Louisiana have family-friendly policies that support employees with prioritizing the well-being of their children.

\*Infant and Toddler Feeding Supports

\*Workplace Supports

Dr. Libbie Sonnier also reported that April 2, 2024, was Geaux Far Louisiana Day. Discussion followed.

**Other Business**: None

**Public Comments:** None