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**Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family  
MINUTES OF MEETING**

*January 18, 2011*

*10am Claiborne Building, Marbois Room*

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**Dr. Katherine Spaht called the meeting to order at 10:04AM**

**II. ROLL CALL**

**The Secretary called the roll with the following results**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Neil Bernard  
Heather Doss  
Peggy Gehbauer  
David Helveston  
Gene Mills  
Linda Ruffin (Paul Pastorek)  
Audrey Pugh  
Katherine Spaht  
Murphy Toerner  
Dorothy Wallis

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Allison Schoonmaker,  
Sellers Maternity Ministries

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Sharon Broome  
Gordon Atwell  
A.G. Crowe  
Penny Dastugue  
Wayne DuBose  
Robbie Endris  
Frank Hoffman  
J. Michael Johnson  
Sue Morrill  
Daniel Kirk  
Fred Lowery  
Drew Murray  
Tony Perkins  
Jonathan Perry  
Fred Selby  
Karen Stubbs

**III. BUSINESS CONSIDERED**

Dr. Spaht stated that with only ten (10) members present that the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family (LCMF) was absent of a quorum and would not be able to vote on any items. She said adoption of the minutes from the December 7, 2010 meeting would be delayed until next meeting date.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

Murphy Toerner introduced Allison Schoonmaker of the Sellers Maternity Ministries of Baton Rouge.

Ms. Schoonmaker gave an overview of the services that Sellers Maternity Ministries offers to the residents of Baton Rouge. She stated that the organization is a home designed to care for single, pregnant, young women who are 25 and younger. Ms. Schoonmaker invited the Commission to attend the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Open House for Sellers, January 23, 2011 from 2p.m.-4p.m.

Dr. Spaht acknowledged subcommittees and offered them an opportunity to give their reports.

Audrey Pugh stated that the Family Issues Subcommittee met at 9am on January 18, 2011. She distributed the "Population and Vital Statistics" section of the 2009 Louisiana Health Report Card as well as data on the district and state-level dropout and graduation rate for Louisiana. She explained how state burdens such as high school dropout rates are recorded by parish and that funding for the departments that collect this statistical data is limited.

Heather Doss asked if there was an opportunity for businesses to partner with such initiatives because they are directly affected.

Ms. Pugh answered that in the past the tobacco industry was involved with parish-wide initiatives. The data had to be presented in a manner that would yield positive results. She explained that the Louisiana Tobacco Settlement was a mandatory earmark to be spent on education, designed to have regional implementation.

Dr. Spaht stated that there needs to be a way to target areas that are most impacted.

Ms. Pugh explained that the Department of Health and Hospitals has been working on it, but it has been difficult to retrieve parish-wide data. She stated that sample sizes in many cases are too small. She further explained that people need to understand that data is necessary to helping communities grow and thrive.

Ms. Pugh reviewed that the information covered in the data was: dropout rates, population, birth data, prenatal care, marriage and divorce data for the intention of taking the information to see identify the specific needs in each parish.

Dorothy Wallis asked what causes the inability to not retrieve necessary data.

Ms. Pugh answered that the information is generalized. She stated that the sample size as well as funding is a factor. She said that every parish does not report consistently.

Ms. Wallis suggested that the information should be collected at the Department of Motor Vehicles when individuals apply for driver's licenses and state issued identification cards. She went on to ask what data is being collected for low birth weight.

Ms. Pugh offered that information such as this is most efficient in states where immunizations are state funded. She stated Louisiana rose from number 40 to number 2 in reporting because of The Louisiana Immunization Network for Kids Statewide System.

Ms. Wallis asked what the reasons for low birth weights in individuals are and what the contributing factors are.

Ms. Pugh answered that access to prenatal care is the main contributing factor to low birth weights in specific individuals.

Gene Mills stated that some parish entities feel that vital statistics are privileged/private information that they do not have to report.

Ms. Pugh offered that manual input increases human error as it relates to reporting data. Electronic filing reduces these risks, she said.

Ms. Toerner suggested that the Marriage Commission could recommend to the Governor that the state increase fees for birth and death certificates to fund the data maintenance systems parish-wide.

Mr. Mills acknowledged that the general public would not be in favor of any taxes or fee increases. He suggested that funding could come from fees tacked onto the general state operating funds. He stated that this was the best Marriage Commission meeting that was held and further thanked Ms. Pugh for the wonderful data and explanations of the reports.

Dr. Spaht reminded members that the Commission could not make motions to recommend because of the absence of a quorum.

Ms. Toerner asked if there were grants available for collecting data.

Ms. Pugh answered that there are in fact grants available, but DHH prefers to partner with community organizations that have received grants.

Mr. Mills stated that the current state required forms are 1) birth certificate, 2) death certificate, 3) high school diplomacy or equivalency, 4) college diploma and 5) dissolution of marriage certificate.

Ms. Pugh shared that there is also a form collected for induced termination/abortion. This data is supposed to be collected for eligibility of state programs such as Medicaid, she said.

Dr. Spaht asked that for the next meeting there needs to be a report with the top 10 parishes with state burden issues. She also asked that the Commission consider sending letters to Gov. Jindal and the Secretary of DHH regarding these issues in data collection. She further asked that the Commission think of incentives that could be offered to encourage the collection of necessary data on the local level.

Ms. Pugh offered that this information could be used to target parishes with specific issues and studied by that respective subcommittee.

Dr. Spaht asked if there were any additions or corrections to the 2010 Marriage Commission End of Year Report. She affirmed the next meeting date to be Tuesday, February 15, 2011 at 10am in the Claiborne Building, with subcommittees meeting at 9am. She asked were there any other matter to come before the committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:16am.