

**Children’s Cabinet Meeting**

**Unapproved Minutes**

**July 19, 2022**

**Members Present**

Department of Children and Family Services - Secretary Marketa Garner Walters

Susan East Nelson, Chair of Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board

Judge Desiree Cook-Calvin, representing Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

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

Joni Landry, representing Superintendent of Education, Dr. Cade Brumley

Chris Fiore, representing Louisiana Workforce Commission Secretary Ava Cates

Tonya Joiner, representing Department of Health Secretary Dr. Courtney Phillips

Marsha Shuler, representing Commissioner Jay Dardenne

**Special Guests**

Governor John Bel Edwards

First Lady Donna Edwards

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell

**Staff:**

Dr. Melanie Washington, Children’s Cabinet Executive Director

Michele Rabalais, LCTF/CC Exec. Assistant

Justin Standifer, Children’s Cabinet Coordinator

**Call to Order**:

Dr. Melanie Washington, Executive Director, called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. and introductions were made.

**Roll Call:**

Michele M. Rabalais, Executive Assistant, called roll.

**Welcome and Opening Remarks:** First Lady Donna Edwards provided the opening remarks.

The First Lady reported she formed the National Coalition for the Prevention of Human Sex Trafficking (NCPHST) with several other First Spouses.

The National Coalition for the Prevention of Human Sex Trafficking is led by First Lady Donna Edwards and aims to raise awareness and promote prevention of human sex trafficking. The leadership of NCPHST is made up of First Spouses from Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Tennessee and Texas who have pledged to leverage their leadership platforms to elevate this cause.

In April, 2022 the NCPHST hosted a Human Trafficking Prevention Event that was held in New Orleans, Louisiana that coincided with the Final Four tournament.

During the planning of the Human Trafficking Prevention Event it was noted that 9-1-1 had no protocol in place to aid victims of Human Trafficking. Since that time policies have been put in place as well as trainings for 9-1-1 personnel.

In addition First Lady Edwards provided an update on the Louisiana Fosters Program. Louisiana Fosters is another initiative that is extremely important to the First Lady who continues to advocate in this area. The First Lady continues to work with youth aging out of foster care.

The Louisiana First Foundation has partnered with the Louisiana Bureau of Family Health and the Picard Center at the University of Louisiana Lafayette. The First Lady’s Office is the lead on an effort to gather information through the Louisiana Community Survey to form the statewide action plan on how best to prevent, intervene and heal trauma, toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences (ACES). Discussion followed.

Governor John Bel Edwards thanked Children’s Cabinet board members for their work and service.

The Governor said he did not get everything he wanted in the legislative session but an overwhelming majority of the requests were approved. Governor Edwards stated that he believes that this year’s budget is a transformational budget if the efforts are sustained. Commitment needs to be sustained for a generation. Teachers and support service staff received raises. There were also increases in funding for Early Childhood Education.

The M.J. Foster Promise Program was awarded $10.5 million. The program provides financial assistance to eligible students who enroll in a qualified program at a two-year public college or university, or an accredited proprietary school licensed by the Board of Regents to pursue an associate degree or a shorter-term postsecondary education credential required for certain high-demand, high-wage occupations aligned with Louisiana’s workforce priorities.

Capital Outlay funds was budgeted that higher education got an additional $312 million, including $50 million to improve buildings on college campuses throughout the state.

Governor Edwards also informed the Board that the redistricting session was unsuccessful. Work will continue on redistricting.

Additional federal funding is available for mental health services for children and youth from federal grants.

Governor Edwards will continue to fight for equal pay and an increased minimum wage.

Covid continues and at this time there is a surge although hospitalizations have decreased. Vaccinations are key to preventing the spread of Covid.

Dr. Melanie Washington, Children’s Cabinet Executive Director, reported that as of this date and time the Children and Youth Planning Boards (CYPB) are not active. Dr. Washington is anxious to get the CYPB’s up and running. Justin Standifer, Children’s Cabinet Coordinator, has been hired and is working on this project.

**2022-2023 Departmental and Legislative Updates:**

**Louisiana Department of Education:** Joni Landry presented the Department of Education (DOE) update.Ms. Landry stated that DOE had eight (8) priority bills:

1. HB 1 – Funding for raises for teachers and support staff and an increase in quality early care seats.
2. SB50 – School choice bill which offers an option for high school students to attend a program of their choice that offers a workforce program without regard to attendance zones.
3. SB 190 – Establishes the Computer Science Education Act to provide for the development of a statewide computer science education program
4. HB 207 - Adds Geometry as a required course for high school students in the career major program to provide for alignment with the 5 core curriculum required for qualification for a TOPS-Tech award
5. HB 911 - Increases the number of required annual literacy screeners for K-3 students from one to three. Requires school districts to utilize literacy coaches for on-site teacher training. Provides for reporting requirements.
6. SB 377 – Provides for an alternative route to teacher certification
7. HB 346 – Geaux Teach: Provides for a program and a fund for the purpose of providing scholarships for students in approved teacher preparation programs
8. HB546 – Removes Praxis score requirement for admission into a teacher education program

**Department of Children and Family Services:** Secretary Marketa Walters, DCFS Secretary, reported the following:

1. As of January, 2022 the FITAP Allotment was raised from $240 (for a family of 3) to the national average of $484.
2. There were a total of 40 bills targeted towards DCFS. Out of the 40 there were 25 that passed including 4 study resolutions. 19 deal with children and families. Secretary Walters reported that the agency was unsuccessful in getting funding to hire enough workers to complete the work that the legislature wants done.
3. ACT 561 - Establishes a continuum of care program for certain pregnant women and parents of young children
4. ACT 506 - Establishes a workforce training initiative to serve public assistance recipients

On the Child Welfare side of DCFS, Secretary Walters reported the following:

1. Provide identification cards for all children and youth in foster care
2. Human Trafficking bill: Senator Mizell introduced a bill that would change the dynamics in how DCFS works with Human Trafficking victims. Prior to the passage of this bill DCFS could only investigate if a parent was culpable. The bill creates a hotline where all Human Trafficking calls would first come to DCFS where staff will determine whether or not it should be reported to law enforcement.
3. ACT 662 (SB 63): If a report involves alleged sex trafficking, all mandatory reporters shall report to DCFS regardless of whether there is alleged parental or caretaker culpability. DCFS shall communicate as soon as possible all reports involving alleged child victims of sex trafficking to the Louisiana State Police for referral to local law enforcement. DCFS will provide for care coordination and advocacy services for victims of child sex trafficking. The advocate assigned to each victim will remain with that person throughout the entire process.
4. Foster care population is rapidly rising as well as gun violence among youth. Over the 4th of July weekend there were 5 preventable deaths.
5. DCFS has information regarding safe sleep that it is willing to share.

**Office of Juvenile Justice:** No report

**Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC):** Chris Fiore presented the LWC report.

1. Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) served 10,000 youth in 140 programs. Class of 2020 had a 98% graduation rate.
2. There has been an increase in apprenticeships.
3. The Louisiana Workplace Commission has launched Tech Ready Louisiana, a free, on-line learning program for local residents. Louisianans will have free access to courses that will help them develop the knowledge and skills needed to find meaningful employment. All courses are online and self-paced so users can work around their busy schedules. Certificates can be earned in three to six months.

**Louisiana Department of Health (LDH):** Tonya Joiner presented the LDH report.

1. HB334 (ACT 151): Provides relative to employment with behavioral health services providers of peer support specialists
2. HB 212 (ACT 137) Provides for the exclusion of fentanyl test strips as drug paraphernalia.
3. SB 213 (ACT 503): Provides relative to specialized behavioral health rehabilitation services in the Louisiana medical assistance program
4. HB933: Provides relative to emergency preparedness among licensed nursing homes. All nursing home plans will be reviewed.
5. SB116 (ACT 676): Creates the Office on Women's Health within the Louisiana Department of Health.
6. HB64 (ACT 202): Provides relative to the definition of a child
7. HB384 (ACT 619) Requires pediatric day health care facilities to provide for installation and operation of cameras at their premises
8. HB827 (ACT 356): Provides relative to screening of children for autism spectrum disorder
9. HCR38: Forms a working group to study the unique needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and co-occurring behavioral health conditions

In addition Ms. Joiner reported that LDH is working with WIC recipients to expand formula options and that 89 infant formula substitutions have been added.

As of this date and time there have been seven (7) cases of monkey pox reported in Louisiana. LDH will continue to closely monitor the situation.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is now up and running. Calls will be answered by highly trained counselors. The 800 number will continue. There will be a large launch in January once all the kinks have been ironed out.

**Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board (CCAB):** Susan East Nelson, Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board Chair, presented the CCAB report.

1. HB746: Provides relative to solitary confinement in juvenile facilities
2. SB323: Provides relative to juveniles in the criminal justice system
3. HB447:  Provides relative to certain violent crimes committed by juveniles
4. SB370: Provides for parent participation after adjudication of a delinquent act committed by their juvenile child.
5. SB377: Provides for sexual assault survivors to have access to certain documents from the forensic medical exam.
6. HB160: Provides relative to abandonment of a rental premises following the declaration of a federally declared disaster
7. HB450: Provides for access to an adopted person's original birth certificate
8. HCR57: Urges and requests the Legislature of Louisiana to support the "Greaux the Good" farmers market match program
9. HB784: Provides relative to universal perinatal mood disorder screening for primary care doctors
10. SB116: Creates the office on women's health within the Louisiana Department of Health.
11. HB865: Provides relative to textbooks and instructional materials used in reading instruction
12. HB214:  Requires passage of a reading instruction test as a condition of teacher certification in elementary education
13. HB136: Requires dyslexia education as a component of teacher education programs
14. SB45: Requires all public school governing authorities to adopt certain policies relative to cameras in certain classrooms by December 31, 2022.
15. HB516: Requires each governing authority of a public high school to adopt policies regarding attendance, breastfeeding, and child care for students who are pregnant or parenting
16. SB47:  Requires public schools to work to develop a mixed provider delivery model of prekindergarten instruction
17. HB548: Requires the state Department of Education to develop and distribute health and safety guidelines relative to best practices for the use of digital devices in public schools
18. HB677:  Provides relative to cost sharing for insulin prescriptions. Caps the out of pocket cost for insulin to $75

Notable losses include the following:

1. HB195: Requires public schools to provide free menstrual products in easily accessible locations
2. HB649:  Provides relative to corporal punishment in elementary and secondary schools
3. SB236: Removes the reduced-price copayment for school meals

**Other Business:** No other business

**Public Comments:** Dr. Chaunda Mitchell will have the Children’s Cabinet Executive Director prioritize getting Children’s Cabinet members to the meetings.

The Governor’s Office of Programs and Planning will hold its first “Back to School” fairs in four areas of the state where book bags and school supplies will be distributed.

First Lady Donna Edwards recommended that Children’s Cabinet Members read the book “Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life” by Casey Gwin.

Hope is much more than wishful thinking. Science tells us that it is the most predictive indicator of well-being in a person’s life. Hope is measurable. It is malleable. And it changes lives. In Hope Rising, Casey Gwinn and Chan Hellman reveal the latest science of hope using nearly 2,000 published studies, including their own research. Based on their findings, they make an impassioned call for hope to be the focus not only of our personal lives, but of public policy for education, business, social services, and every part of society.