

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

**Unapproved Minutes**

**September 12, 2023**

**Member Name: Attendees**

Connie Bellone Doris G. Brown

Amanda Brunson Kathy Coleman

Teresa Falgoust Julie Foster Hagan

Annette Fruge Sarah Hinshaw Fusilier

Tamara Jones Mattilyn Karst

Chenier Montz Courtney Myers

Lakeisha W. Robertson Susan Schowen

Marsha Shuler Ernise Singleton

Stephanie Sterling Michael Victorian

Kahree Wahid Lenell Young

ReShonn Saul

**Staff:**

Dr. Melanie Washington, Children’s Cabinet Executive Director

Michele M. Rabalais, Children’s Cabinet Executive Assistant

**Guests:**

Dr. Shenetha Ramsey

**Welcome and Call to Order**:

ReShonn Saul, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and welcomed all present.

**Roll Call:**

Michele M. Rabalais, Executive Assistant, called roll.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Approval of the minutes was tabled as a quorum was not present.

**Kids Count Data**: Teresa Falgoust with Agenda for Children discussed the latest Kids Count Data. Agenda for Children has partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation since 1991 to provide the annual Kids Count book.

The 2023 Kids Count Data Book on Louisiana’s Children is a 64-parish report on child well-being in Louisiana that features data on 39 different measures of child well-being, including demographics, economic well-being, health, education, family, community and safety.

Each parish profile includes data highlights so that readers can easily see where their community has room to grow, as well as celebrate areas where they are doing particularly well or have improved. Parish profiles also allow readers to compare their parish’s data to statewide data and to identify trends over time. Discussion followed.

For more information regarding the Kids Count Data you can visit the web-site at datacenter.aecf.org. If you would like additional copies please contact Theresa Falgoust at tfalgoust@agendaforchildren.org.

**Three-Sixty Project**:

Dr. Shenetha Ramsey, founder and Executive Director, of the Three-Sixty Project presented information regarding her agency.

Three-Sixty Resource Project (TSRP) was founded in 2015 in East Baton Rouge Parish. "Three-Sixty" means to turn lives around while enriching them. In this matter, it means turning the lives of new and parenting mothers around for a better quality of life while becoming aware of the social issues, which prevalently negatively impact children, youth, and families.  
  
Three-Sixty Resource Project (TSRP) promotes awareness to educate new and parenting mothers by providing self-help knowledge and strategies as it relates to holistic family values, which strengthen and maintain healthy family functioning.  
  
To educate families to build and/or restore family functioning.  
  
To promote awareness of the social issues that children, youth, and families are facing today. The social issues include drug usage, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, bullying, family/community violence, suicidal ideations, and low self-esteem. As evidence of these social issues, solutions are warranted. Discussion followed.

Services offered by the Three-Sixty Resource Project (TSRP) include: counseling for individuals, youth above teens, and family support services.  Confidential counseling is also available online.

**Budget Priority Overview:**

**Family Stability:** Renee Antoine reported on behalf of the Family Stability subcommittee.

The Family Stability Subcommittee’s focus is child hunger, and the broader range of family supports. Addressing systems and processes related to the administration of public benefits is a core priority. When turbulent times hit families, whether from the pandemic or from natural disasters, those with the least amount of economic cushion are the most heavily impacted. SNAP families that face the loss of benefits due to the administrative steps required to keep their benefits face difficulties that have been compounded due to the pandemic and recent storms. We recommend policy decisions that remove barriers for families in need of benefits and additional investments in systems that keep the doors of access open. Furthermore, we must invest in the continued development of Louisiana resource database infrastructure and expand departments that provide unified cross-sector engagement to ensure that Louisiana is providing the greatest support for its most economically vulnerable families. Critical priorities are centered on mental health, child/adolescent developmental education, and printed resource directories. Core pillars include: policy, workforce development, system infrastructure, finance, research/evaluation, and equitable implementation of strategies.

1. **Mental Health infrastructure for trauma and emergency response:** (pro bono services)

Between pandemic recovery and several disasters occurring simultaneously, Louisiana families have faced severe physical and mental hardships. The current healthcare shortage areas throughout the state indicate a strong need for aggressive incentives to ensure mental health services are provided by the most qualified clinicians in the most disparate geographical areas. Creating incentives for trauma trained clinicians to provide pro bono services resulting in a significant tax credit is recommended. A database of mental health professionals participating in the program can be broadcast in geographical areas with highest rates of trauma exposures.

1. **Micro learnings for caregivers** (ages and stages expectations across the lifespan).

Due to the growing number of transitional foster care participants in our state and the growing number of transitional guardians, there is a recommendation for ages and stages expansion or a similar framework. Providing brief (30 minutes or less) summaries of developmental expectations and/or warnings of symptoms associated with social determinants of health or ACES exposures would be beneficial. Possible funding pathways can be explored through the Department of Education, Department of Health and/or insurance reimbursement for healthcare wellness visits.

1. **State resource directory expansion and printed database.**

2-1-1 Printed state resource directory available to those with cognitive delays and/or unable to access broadband. Statewide access to broadband projects are underway, but many will require supplemental strategies to increase access to resources in rural areas. There are also many populations who are unable to navigate digital services. A printed family stability resource directory will alleviate gaps to access for vulnerable communities. Possible funding mechanisms include: 211, Medicaid, and Medicare.

**Behavioral Health Services and Supports:** Marsha Shuler reported on behalf of Behavioral Health Services and Supports subcommittee.

The Behavioral Health Subcommittee has concentrated its efforts on expanding access to care to children and youth through the Medicaid in Schools program because of the large amount of federal funds available to provide the services. Provision of behavioral health services benefit the students as well as schools where disruptive behavior interferes with classroom learning. But school systems have failed to tap into the opportunity available because of a myriad of issues. There is an opportunity today to change that situation as the federal government is now providing new flexibilities and ways to eliminate administrative burdens. Expanding Medicaid in Schools remains our top priority because the subcommittee sees the potential for both health care and educational improvements. In addition, the subcommittee adds its support to two initiatives: the Louisiana Department of Health’s mobile crisis response teams for children and adolescents on Medicaid and a state law mandated pilot study aimed at identifying and providing services to students in need of mental health and behavioral health services aimed at reducing expulsions and suspensions.

1. **Medicaid State Plan Amendment:** The subcommittee endorses a Medicaid State Plan Amendment which will remove barriers hindering or stopping Louisiana school systems’ participation in the Medicaid in Schools program. A  Medicaid State Plan Amendment which won federal approved in 2020 expanded the program to all students. Since then more medical and behavioral health services have been provided but nowhere close to the level desired.  Now CMS is offering new flexibilities to remove barriers to schools participating or taking advantage of the program to a greater extent, including broadening the pool of providers, expanding the pool of eligible students to 0-3, and eliminating a lot of administrative paperwork. The subcommittee endorses the new SPA in line with CMS guidelines and a statewide electronic health records system to help ease the burden on local schools of documentation of services.

**Potential Funding Sources:** A state appropriation may be needed for the electronic records system. Costs have been estimated to be between $1.5 million and $4 million. Training and on-going maintenance funding would also need to be considered.. A new federal competitive grant could provide a source of funding. In addition, an administrative fee that schools pay to LDH could be tapped.. The Departments of Health and Education should work together in determining costs and the best route for funding

1. **Mobile Crisis Response and Community Brief Crisis Support:** The Louisiana Department of Health’s Office of Behavior Health has begun to phase-in mobile response teams to respond to children and adolescents in mental and behavioral health crisis. The service is available as an initial intervention for individuals in crisis in which teams deploy to where the individual is located in the community. It’s part of a four-pronged approach designed to provide continuity of care for those experiencing emotional distress.

**Potential Funding Sources:** OBH has started the initiative but there will be a need for the annualization of funding in the next fiscal year’s budget. A budget request will be made by OBH as the budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2024, is being drafted.

1. **Mental and Behavioral Health Screenings Pilot:** A new state law mandates a pilot study to aid in the reduction of suspensions and expulsions in Louisiana’s public schools. The law requires the Louisiana Department of Education to develop and administer a pilot program in three school systems for screening students and providing services with respect to mental health and behavioral health. The law requires school health centers to be registered with the Office of Public Health.

**Potential Funding Sources:** The Department of Education has indicated there are federal grant funds potentially available to finance the pilot study. Federal funding is also likely to be available through Medicaid in Schools to pay toward the salaries of health providers and services.

**Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health**: Dr. Sarah Hinshaw Fuselier reported on behalf of the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health subcommittee.

The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Subcommittee’s focus is on continuing the progress on the implementation of ECSS by supporting agency planning, early adopter implementation, statewide infrastructure development, workforce development, and program implementation.

1. **Appropriate the remaining $9 million from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** to Early Childhood Support & Services.
2. **Create a streamlined task force** including content experts and stakeholders to guide the development, implementation, quality assurance, and sustainability efforts of ECSS.

**Vulnerable Youth**: Michelle Gros was unavailable to report on behalf of the Vulnerable Youth subcommittee.

**Early Learning, Literacy, and K-12:**

The Early Learning, Literacy, and K-12 Subcommittee’s focus is on the continued need for funding for early learning, improving reading attainment and issues related to K-12. This subcommittee makes the following recommendations that build on the budget and legislative work done for FY2023. The recommendations are as follows:

1. **Invest $115 Million of state funds**, as recommended by the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, to fully launch LA B-to-3, and invest an increase of that amount every year for 10 years.
2. **Invest $3 million of state funds** to continue the Louisiana Department of Education’s READ program

Dr. Melanie Washington requests that any comments regarding the recommendations be sent to her no later than Monday, September 18th so that the final report can be completed before being brought before the Children’s Cabinet.

**Other Business**:

Dr. Melanie Washington shared the following:

1. Specific Budget items are due to the Children’s Cabinet by November 30 and they should first be turned in to Dr. Washington no later than November 24, 2023.
2. The next CCAB Meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2023.
3. Strengthening Families Conference is scheduled to be held September 7 at the Pennington Conference Center.
4. Fatherhood Conference is scheduled for September 14th from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Valdry Center for Philanthropy at Southern University.
5. CCAB will be growing as the organization Grandparents Raising Grandchildren is now legally a part of CCAB.
6. Marsha Shuler suggested that CCAB leadership review attendance records of advisory board members in view of problems getting a quorum. The CCAB bylaws include provisions for replacements of frequent absentees. She recommended that the bylaws be followed. In addition, several organizations with representation no longer exist. They need to be removed from the CCAB law.

**Public Comments: None**

**Upcoming CCAB meeting(s):**

November 14, 2023 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Upcoming Children’s Cabinet meeting(s):**

October 17, 2023 10:30 am – 12 pm, 4th Floor Press Room, Capitol

Meeting adjourned.