



John Bel Edwards
Governor

State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DRUG POLICY

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell
Director, Drug Policy &
Executive Director,
Diversity and Inclusion

Kristy Miller
Assistant Director

DRUG POLICY BOARD
April 8, 2021; 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

MINUTES

Call to Order

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell, Director of the Governor's Office of Drug Policy and Chair of the Drug Policy Board, called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

Welcome and Introductions

Chaunda welcomed everyone. For the sake of time, Chaunda asked that voting members introduce themselves first and then members of the public would be allowed to either introduce themselves or type their names in the chat window to denote their attendance. After introductions, she announced that there were 13 members present so quorum was achieved. A list of all members and stakeholders who attended the virtual meeting is included at the end of this document.

Old Business

Review and approve minutes from previous meeting

Chaunda asked everyone to refer to the minutes that were emailed prior to the meeting. Kristy Miller, Assistant Director of the Office of Drug Policy, put the minutes up on the screen. Chaunda acknowledged the comprehensiveness of the minutes and then asked if there were any edits or amendments to be made. Hearing none, Michael Comeaux, Louisiana Department of Education, made a motion to approve the minutes. Rebecca Nugent, LA State Police Crime Lab, seconded the motion. Vote by voice was made. All who were present agreed with the motion. None disagreed. None abstained.

New Business

A. Presentation: HOPE Council 2020 Year End Report

Dr. James Hussey, who is the Medical Director for the Office of Behavioral Health at the LA Department of Health and also serves as the Chair of the Heroin and Opioid Prevention & Education Council, conducted a brief presentation during which he provided an overview of the *2020 Year-End Report of State and Local Responses to the Opioid Crisis: Interagency Coordination Plan*. His presentation was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation which is available if anyone would like access to it.

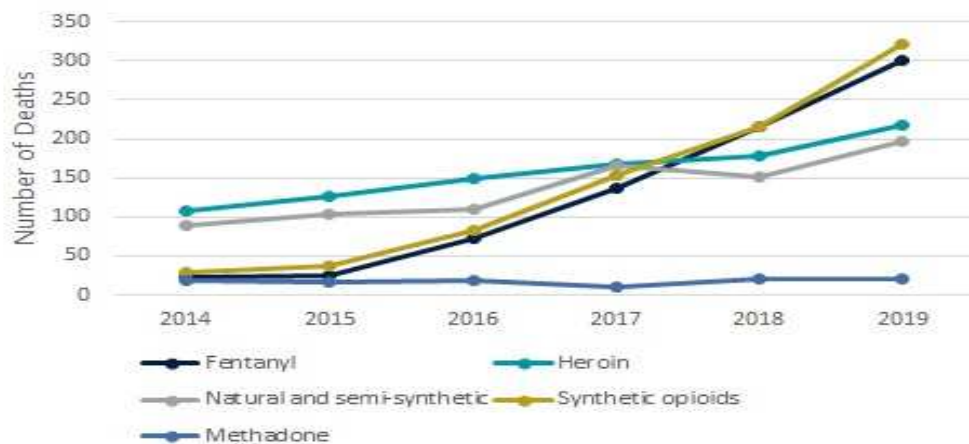
Dr. Hussey started out by reminding Drug Policy Board members about the thirteen agencies represented on the Council and the names of the individuals designated to represent those agencies. He segued into explaining that this End-of-Year Report was originally expected to be one in which the Council would be able to present a third wave of data, and thus, be able to conduct some analysis into

trends as they relate to some of the measures the Council is tracking. However, due to the pandemic, the provision of services was hugely disrupted across the state which severely impacted data collection.

Dr. Hussey went on to explain that, despite challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and numerous hurricane and storm-related emergency declarations, Louisiana's PMP data has continued to show a *decrease* in the number of *opioid prescriptions* written, and PMP data showed an *increase* in the numbers of Opiate Antagonist (e.g., Narcan, Naltrexone, Naloxone, Vivitrol, and Evzio) prescriptions filled, and an increase in the numbers of opiate partial agonists (e.g., Suboxone, buprenorphine, etc.) prescribed. Since the 2019 HOPE report, Louisiana also saw an increase in those accessing both outpatient and inpatient Medicaid residential substance use services.

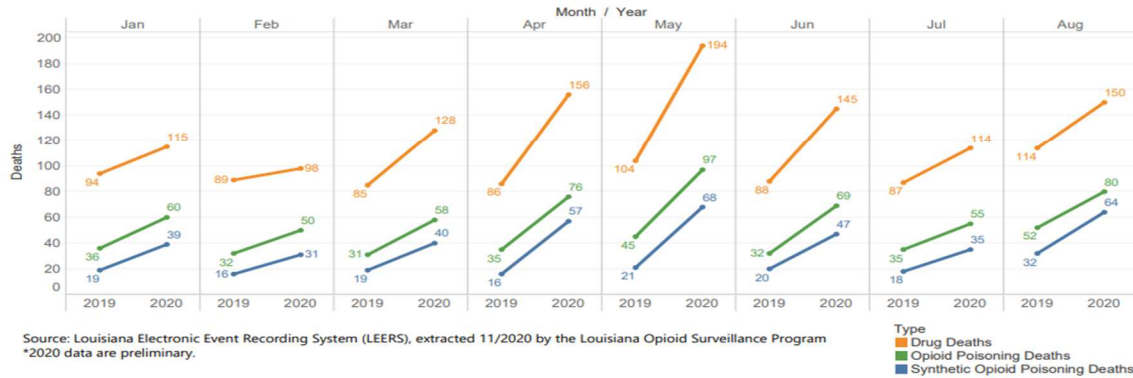
However, even with increased use of these treatments, Louisiana Medicaid claims data shows that both opioid-related emergency department visits and inpatient hospital admissions continued to rise in Louisiana. Most concerning among this year's trends, opioid poisonings, synthetic opioid poisonings, and all drug deaths continued to increase since the last report, with notable spikes coincident with the COVID-19 outbreak beginning in March 2020. The Louisiana State Police Bureau of Investigations reported that *illicit fentanyl seizures increased substantially* from 49 grams seized in 2019 to 3.6 kilograms seized in 2020, representing a dramatic increase over the prior year, and reflecting the national trend.

Dr. Hussey showed the graph below in his presentation which represents the number of deaths by specific opioids from 2014-2019. He asked people to look at the gold and black lines which represent synthetic opioids and fentanyl, respectively, as the highest contributors. Conversely, he noted that Methadone remains the drug which contributed to the lowest number of deaths so the argument that medication assisted treatment is just replacing one drug with another is a fallacy.



Dr. Hussey showed a second graph about how the fatal drug overdoses changed from month to month from Jan-Aug 2019 compared to Jan-Aug 2020. He explained how the sharp spikes mirrored the onset of Covid-19 and the increases in cases. As cases increased, services for treatment and ongoing recovery decreased due to restrictions.

Fatal Drug Overdoses: COVID Comparison
Louisiana, Jan-Aug 2019 and Jan-Aug 2020



After providing this data-based context, Dr. Hussey provided some additional impact data for measures associated with Medicaid Opioid Prescriptions filled, Medicaid Medication-Assisted Treatment Prescriptions, Medicaid Naloxone prescriptions filled, Medicaid Number of Emergency Department days for Opioid Use Disorders (OUD), Medicaid Inpatient/Residential OUD, Medicaid Outpatient ASAM OUD, and LSP Seized contraband.

Finally, Dr. Hussey explained that the review of the data in addition to input from the Domain Impact Groups contributed to the development of 7 recommendations. These recommendations include: person-centered recommendations, system-centered recommendations, special population-centered recommendations, investigate ways to remove barriers to SUD and OUD service access through regulatory flexibility, data collection and data analysis recommendations, treatment retention strategy recommendations, and HOPE Council General and Impact Workgroup Meeting recommendations. The FULL approved report may be found at <https://ldh.la.gov/hope>.

At the conclusion of Dr. Hussey’s presentation, Chaunda reminded everyone that the HOPE Council is a board that reports to the Drug Policy Board. Further, she shared that the legislation that created the Council requires them to develop this annual year-end report. She concluded by saying that while the HOPE Council’s report does not require the approval of the Drug Policy Board prior to publication, the Board has traditionally received a briefing from the HOPE Council and then voted to endorse the Year-End Report as a way of expressing support for the work of the Council. With that, Chaunda recommended that the Drug Policy Board consider such an endorsement again for this report. Dr. Janice Williams, LA Department of Health, expressed her admiration for Dr. Hussey and the HOPE Council for the work they did. Malcolm Broussard, LA Board of Pharmacy, agreed and made a motion that the Drug Policy Board endorse the *2020 Year-End Report of State and Local Responses to the Opioid Crisis: Interagency Coordination Plan*. Chris Alderman, LA Attorney General’s Office, seconded the motion. All members approved. None dissented. None abstained. Chaunda asked Dr. Hussey to convey the appreciation and support to the Council members.

B. Presentation: OBH Opioid Grants Update

Dr. Janice Williams who is the Deputy Assistant Secretary at the LA Department of Health and lead of the Adult, Child, and Family Division in the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), conducted a brief presentation on the opioid grants currently being administered by the Office of Behavioral Health.

Dr. Williams’ presentation began with a list of current grant programs:

- Louisiana State Opioid Response Grant (LaSOR), October 2020 - September 2022
- Department of Corrections and Public Safety (DOC), Supported by LaSOR until 9/2022

- Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP I and II), October 2017 – September 2021
- Covid Emergency Grant (COVID-E), April 2020- August 2021/Supp: February 2021-May 2022

Dr. Williams emphasized that these grants are coordinated and strategic. Particularly, through the collaboration with Local Governing Entities (LGEs) and other local organizations, these grants are seen as the heartbeat of the communities’ services for opioid prevention, treatment, and recovery. Dr. Williams proceeded to briefly describe the size and scope of each grant program.

Louisiana State Opioid Response Grant (LaSOR): \$22 Million (Two Yrs.), \$6 Million Supplemental. This is the largest and most comprehensive of the opioid response efforts being funded by the federal government. The program is focused on the following goals: increase the number of persons served via MAT, increase the number of Office-Based Opioid Treatment Programs in Louisiana, decrease illicit opioid drug use, and reduce the overdose death rates. The grant utilizes a HUB and Spoke model to best manage the vast array of partners and providers who are providing services and resources. OBH provide fiscal and administrative oversight; partners with “Spokes” to ensure positive outcomes; funds prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery supports statewide; and conducts technical assistance.

DOC Supported work through LaSOR: Integrated pre-release/post-release care model comprised of appropriate evidence-based treatment and services. The phases of offender support are (1) screening & assessment of qualifying offenders, (2) pre-release substance use disorder (SUD) Treatment & medication-assisted treatment mainly with Vivitrol, (3) transition planning as release nears & ongoing MAT, and (4) post-release SUD treatment & monitoring.

Participating Facilities include Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP): Angola, LA; Louisiana Correctional Institution for Women (LCIW): Baker, LA & St. Gabriel, LA; Dixon Correctional Institute (DCI): Jackson, LA; Steve Hoyle Intensive Substance Abuse Program (SHISAP) at Bossier Parish Correctional Center: Plain Dealing, LA; Louisiana Transitional Center for Women (LTCW): Tallulah, LA; and Lafourche Parish Prison (LPP): Thibodaux, LA. Also, the Lafourche Parish Prison plans to offer buprenorphine products for medically managed detox in the near future. Dr. Williams provided the outcomes below as part of her presentation.

Implementation Years including previous STR grant continuing through LaSOR 9/17/17 to 12/31/2020					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
# of offenders identified & screened for enrollment	121	590	569	293	1,573
# of offenders enrolled from screening	121	526	556	292	1,495
# of offenders released from program	49	220	468	336	1,073
# of offenders w/ successful completion of the program*	49	217	457	104	827
# of offenders that received vivitrol injection prior to release	0	73	88	29	190

Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP) I: \$100,000 for 2 years (October 2017-September 2019) and *COAP II:* \$1.2 million for 3 years (October 2018-September 2021). COAP I was designed as

a planning grant that allowed OBH to develop a planning team and identify a strategy to move forward. The following agencies met and committed to the implementation of this COAP I; LDH/OBH, the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE), LDH/Office of Public Health, DOC, Department of Children and Family Services, the New Orleans Division of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug Court Program, the Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, representative from the 4 LGEs that were from the targeted parishes to include Capital Area, Metropolitan, Florida Parishes, and Jefferson Parish and local government representatives from these parishes.

The program goals for COAP II were to engage and retain justice involved persons in treatment and recovery, increase the use of diversion and/or alternatives to incarceration, and reduce opioid overdoses and deaths among justice involved persons. Through the collaborations with the partner agencies, peer support staff and a behavioral health professional provided assessments and recovery support services were provided to justice involved individuals in multiple jails and prisons.

Emergency Grant to Address Mental and Substance Use Disorders During COVID-19:

\$4.8 million over 2 years. This is a complicated grant that is targeted toward different population groups. Because of the targeted nature of the grant, the federal grantor has very detailed and specific reporting requirements for explaining how members of each population are reached. The program goals include provide treatment for individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMIs) and Substance Use Disorders who tested positive for COVID-19 in an isolated setting, provide training & financial support to evidence based behavioral health practitioners across the state in their transition to enhance and expand the use of telehealth technologies, implement a Recovery Support Warm Line that targets health care professionals in need of recovery supports, and promote a healthy workforce by addressing the emotional and psychological impact of COVID-19 in the workplace. LDH was able to stand up a COVID-19 Isolation Unit with the help of Odyssey House in New Orleans.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Judge Scott Schlegel, District Court Judge appointee, asked a question about the expansion of telehealth services and whether there were plans to build out a network of telehealth professionals to assist. He explained that lack of providers is a very real thing, particularly in rural areas, and really strained the system that does exist during Covid. Dr. Williams responded that they have been encouraging folks with LMHPs – licensed mental health professionals – to obtain certifications that will allow them to expand their telehealth capacity. At the federal level, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is the major grantor of funds that focuses on building the telehealth infrastructure. Judge Schlegel recommended that the groups involved should consider including a centralized way to request telehealth services for specific physical, mental, and behavioral health needs that could then be funneled to appropriate providers for follow-up. Dr. Williams responded that this kind of centralized method for triaging telehealth need requests has been discussed and will continue to be researched.

C. Presentation: 2020 Drug Analysis & Toxicology Data

Rebecca Nugent, who is the Chemistry Manager at the LA State Police Crime Lab, conducted a presentation on trends identified by the Drug and Toxicology units in 2020. Rebecca began her presentation with data on seized drugs. She showed a graph of top trending drugs seized between 2009 - 2020; botanical marijuana represented the drug that showed up positive in the most number of items. When Rebecca removed marijuana from the analysis, almost every other drug was showing a downward trend in positive tests except fentanyl. At this point, Rebecca shared how Covid and the resulting Stay-at-home order impacted the Crime Lab. In 2020, her staff was reduced to working at 50% capacity as a protective mechanism. Furthermore, she experienced a more permanent reduction in force when an Analyst resigned. Thus, the Crime Lab tested many fewer seized items for the Drug Unit last year. She speculated that the reduction in certain drugs testing positive may be related at least partially to fewer overall tests being conducted. However, even with those factors, she saw a 107%

increase in the number of items containing fentanyl and fentanyl analogs seized by the Drug Unit. Rebecca reported that this isn't just for powder form, but also in the form of counterfeit pharmaceuticals.

Rebecca shifted to talking about trends identified by the Toxicology Unit. She explained that the State Police Crime Lab analyzes over 90% of Louisiana's blood/urine kits, or between 2,500-3,000 tox requests annually. Further, approximately 90% of the kits submitted to the lab are traffic related. The toxicology tests can identify over 120 individual drugs/metabolites. In 2019, LSP Crime Lab was able to begin quantifying certain drugs that they could not previously, meaning they can now not only tell you if a certain drug is in the sample, but how much of the drug is in the sample at the time of draw. Rebecca showed a graph that documented the average number of drugs/metabolites found per sample from 2015-2020. The average number increased significantly from 2019-2020 from 2.2 to 5.2. Rebecca cautioned that it is too early to tell whether this huge increase represents more poly-drug use or the Lab's ability to detect and quantify more drugs, or both. Next Rebecca showed a list of the top ten drugs detected in blood only specimens for both 2019 and 2020 and discussed the changes in the top ten list from year to year.

D. Update: Pre-filed drug policy-related bills for 2021

Kristy Miller, Assistant Director for the Office of Drug Policy, provided an update on the status of the pre-filed bills as they have currently progressed through the legislative session. Kristy explained that she had sent a PDF of the entire tracking chart to all members and stakeholders prior to the meeting so, in the interest of time, she was only going to touch on some of the most watched bills. Kristy explained that there are 34 bills, 27 House bills and 7 Senate bills, in total that the office is tracking. Kristy touched on marijuana related bills that addressed medical marijuana, decriminalization, and legalization. In addition, Kristy described one bill that addressed hemp. Kristy highlighted 1 bill dealing specifically with opioids, 2 bills addressing tobacco and vapor products, and 1 bill addressing impaired driving. Finally, Kristy highlighted 1 bill related to alcohol sales and 3 bills addressing drugs as a group.

Other Business

A. Office of Drug Policy updates

Chaunda explained that Governor Edwards has outlined his agenda for the legislative session and she would send a list of those items to members after the meeting. She explained that the priorities include pay transparency, Title IX and sexual harassment, mandatory kindergarten, foster youth bill of rights, and an office of human trafficking prevention among others.

B. Member agency updates

No members offered agency updates.

Public Comments

No members of the public offered any comments.

Upcoming Meetings

A list of upcoming meetings for all the board and commissions associated with the Office of Drug Policy was provided.

Adjournment

Chaunda announced that there was no additional business to address. With that, Judge Scott Schlegel, made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Janice Williams seconded the motion. By a live voice vote, all members approved the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.

MEETING ATTENDEES

VOTING MEMBERS

Member Agency	Appointee/Designee	In Attendance
Alcohol industry representative	Buddy Schilling	Yes
Attorney General's Office	Chris Alderman	Yes
Board of Pharmacy	Malcolm Broussard	Yes
District Court Judge	Scott Schlegel	Yes
Federal agency with AOD ed/ treatment/prev responsibilities	Vacant	-----
Governor's Office of Drug Policy	Dr. Chaunda Mitchell	Yes
House member, Committee on Health and Welfare	Representative Bob Owen	No
Louisiana Commission on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse	Vacant/Commission no longer exists	-----
Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement	Linda Gautier	No
Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services	Vacant	----
Louisiana Department of Education	Michael Comeaux	Yes
Louisiana Department of Health	Dr. Janice Williams	Yes
Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections	Blake LeBlanc	Yes
Louisiana District Attorneys Association	Warren Montgomery	No
Louisiana Highway Safety Commission	Jessica Bedwell (proxy for Lisa Freeman)	Yes
Louisiana Office of Alcohol & Tobacco Control	Val Penouilh (proxy for Ernest Legier)	No
Louisiana Public Defenders Board	Remy Starns	No
Louisiana Sheriffs' Association	Shannon Dirmann	No
Louisiana State Police	Rebecca Nugent	Yes
National Guard	MSgt Amy Thomas (for Major Snowden)	Yes
Physician	Dr. Joseph Kanter	No
Private organization involved in substance abuse Prevention	Vacant	-----
Senate member, Committee on Health and Welfare	Senator Gerald Boudreaux	Yes

OF-COUNSEL MEMBERS

Member Agency	Appointee/Designee	In Attendance
LA State Board of Medical Examiners	Dr. Vincent Culotta	Yes
LA Department of Veteran's Affairs	Barry Robinson	No
Advisory Council on Heroin and Opioid Prevention and Education	Dr. Jim Hussey	Yes
Drug Enforcement Administration, NOLA Office	Randy Harness	Yes
Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area	Don Petty	Yes

STAFF

Kristy Miller, Governor's Office of Drug Policy

GUESTS

Dustin Danos, Attorney Generals' office

Leslie Freeman, LDH, Office of Behavioral Health

Cathy Childers, Louisiana Highway Safety Commission and Co-Chair of Prevention Systems Cmte

Amiee Moles, SREC

John Aggrey, SREC

Carolyn Purser, SREC
Sonia Armstrong, National Guard
Rachel Smith, LDAA
Judge Jules Edwards, LHSC
Jay Besse, LDH/OPH