

**Children’s Cabinet Meeting**

**Unapproved Minutes**

**February 14, 2023**

**Members Present**

Reshonn Saul, Chair of Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board

Curtis Nelson, Office of Juvenile Justice

Commissioner John “Jay” Dardenne, Commissioner of Administration

Dr. Belinda Creel-Davis, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Members Present via Zoom**

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

Secretary Don Pierson, Louisiana Department of Economic Development

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

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

Ashley Sias for Terri Porche-Ricks, Department of Children and Family Services

Tonya Joiner for Secretary Dr. Courtney Phillips, Louisiana Department of Health

**Special Guests**

Governor John Bel Edwards

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell

Katina Semien-Smothers

**Staff:**

Dr. Melanie Washington, Children’s Cabinet Executive Director

Michele Rabalais, Louisiana Children’s Trust Fund/Children’s Cabinet executive assistant

**Call to Order**:

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

**Welcome and Opening Remarks:**

First Lady Donna Edwards sent her regrets that she was unable to attend the meeting.

Governor John BelEdwards provided the opening remarks. The Governor kept his remarks short as he was meeting with the US Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack at Southern University for a Press Conference.

Governor Edwards reported:

He had met with Secretary Vilsack in Washington and discussed non-congregate summer feeding programs. The Governor is awaiting guidance on how to continue non-congregate feeding programs. This can be done in a number of ways such as providing more than one meal at a time to take home; mailing food items etc.

At the last Children’s Cabinet meeting, we were happy to report no hurricanes made landfall in Louisiana during the hurricane season, and about a month later we were plagued with a number of tornadoes across the state. These continued weather events have directly impacted Louisiana’s insurance crisis.

The legislature recently held a special session to address the property insurance crisis. $45 million was appropriated to the Insure Louisiana Incentive fund, which was created during the 2022 legislative session with the goal of attracting more insurance companies to Louisiana.

Medicaid eligibility will have to be re-determined for all recipients now that expanded pandemic coverage is ending. LDH will be in contact with all Medicaid recipients and will assist those who will be losing coverage in finding coverage elsewhere.

In 2016 Louisiana’s uninsured rate among adults was 22.7%. It has fallen by more than half, to 9.4%. These are just some of the results of expanding Medicaid. The expansion creates jobs, improves the state budget, and is growing the state’s economy by bringing federal tax dollars to Louisiana.

In 2016 Louisiana’s unemployment rate was 6%. This past December’s unemployment rate was the lowest ever, coming in at 3.5%.

Since the worst of the pandemic, Louisiana’s unemployment rate has dropped 9.6 percentage points from 13.1% and Louisiana has added more than 233,000 jobs.

Louisiana has made historic investments in education at every level, including $159 million in higher education and more than $80 million in early childhood education. Seven years ago, Louisiana led the nation in higher education disinvestment. Long term investments in early education are so important for our state. We have to maintain these investments for at least a generation to see real transformation.

**Roll Call:**

Michele M. Rabalais, Executive Assistant, called roll.

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

**LCTF Comfort Boxes:** Tamara R. Jones, Louisiana Children’s Trust Fund (LCTF) Executive Director, reported that LCTF has partnered with the Louisiana First Foundation (LFF) to assemble and distribute comfort boxes to Head Start and elementary schools throughout the state. Boxes were distributed to all Children’s Cabinet Members present.

**NOLA – Children and Youth Planning Board (CYPB):** Karen Evans, Executive Director, New Orleans CYPB presented information regarding the New Orleans CYPB and shared information about its Master Plan. Ms. Evans shared information concerning the New Orleans CYPB Youth Master Plan.

The Youth Master Plan is a comprehensive roadmap for creating and sustaining a positive, youth development focused, results-oriented New Orleans that works for all young people.

The Youth Master Plan brings together young people, parents, educators community leaders and other key stakeholders to develop, implement and monitor a ten-year, multisector plan for improving outcomes for our children and youth across Orleans Parish. The ten year plan is not based upon state leadership but instead it is based on the needs of children, youth and families in the Orleans area.

The main goals of the Youth Master Plan are as follows:

***Health and Well-Being***: Decreased % of young people experiencing exposure to violence, symptoms of depression, substance abuse, PTSD and anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

***Space and Place***: Increased % of households aware of and able to access community services within one mile of their home.

Increased % of households that can access youth-centered spaces with programming and high capacity transit lines within 15 minutes or less via bike or foot.

***Learning***: Increased levels of positive student engagement.

Increased % of young people who are connected to learning and career pathways.

***Economic Stability***: Decreased % of families who live at or below the ALICE threshold, through an increase in wages.

***Safety and Justice***: Decreased # of young people who enter, and return to, the criminal justice system, with a focus on addressing equity and racial disparities.

Decreased # of young people who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Decreased % of young people experiencing exposure to violence, symptoms of depression, substance abuse, PTSD and anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

***Youth Voice***: Increase the opportunities for youth participation and leadership in boards, committees, commissions, and planning efforts across the city.

Increase the collective awareness of and value for supporting our young people’s development of agency and identity.

Ms. Evans stated that youth are the solution not the problem.

Discussion followed.

**Integrated Case Management: No Wrong Door:** Cassandra Large, DCFS, and presented information on the No Wrong Door (NWD) system.

No Wrong Door provides a universal gateway to community and government programs. The system enables people seeking healthcare coverage and services to complete one application that determines which health and social services programs they are eligible for. DCFS relies on ALICE information and has partnered with the Louisiana Association of United Ways, 2-1-1 and Unite Us, to better serve Louisiana’s children and families.

The NWD program raises visibility of the full range of available options; provides objective information, advice, counseling and assistance; empowers Louisiana citizens to make informed decisions about services and supports; as well as helps people access public and private long-term/short-term services and supports programs. Discussion followed.

Ashley Sias, Assistant Secretary of Family Support, DCFS, reported that during the COVID pandemic, DCFS began accepting DSNAP applications virtually. Families no longer needed to go to a site to apply for DSNAP benefits. A call center is also available to apply via telephone. In addition FITAP benefits have been increased for the first time in approximately 20 years.

Ms. Sias also reported that DCFS is working with college campuses to have a hunger free campus. Representatives will be available to explain eligibility requirements for SNAP benefits.

Implementing No Wrong Door began with entering into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Louisiana Association of United Ways. This includes the following services:

1. Additional resource access for clients to call 2-1-1 for information/referrals 24/7
2. Access to a statewide Human Services database licensing/report dashboard that is provided

through 2-1-1

1. Contracted with LA 2-1-1 for disaster and information and referral along with LDH which has provided COVID response
2. LA 2-1-1 local referral and care coordination

A customer can enter any service that they need, get an assessment of some type including LA 2-1-1 and the individual helping can electronically communicate with other agencies and community based organizations to provide the resources needed by the individuals. Discussion followed.

**Children’s Cabinet Initiatives:** Dr. Melanie Washington, Children’s Cabinet Director, presented information regarding the following Children’s Cabinet Initiatives:

1. Vulnerable Youth Summit: One full day Summit to raise awareness; and educate stakeholders on truancy problems. The Children’s Cabinet will partner with the Pelican Center possibly in early August, 2023. The Summit will include the following components:
	1. Family Stability
	2. Grief and loss
	3. Substance Abuse
	4. Jail
	5. Gang Activity

Attendees will include Juvenile Justice staff, Courts, FINS staff, and CYPB staff.

2.) Fathering Together Conference for dads showcasing the importance of fatherhood involvement. Early positive fatherhood involvement leads to greater academic success, more positive social behavior, fewer conduct problems, higher self-esteem and lowers depression as well as reduces contact with the juvenile justice system. Discussion followed.

**Other Business:**

Dr. Washington introduced Reshonn Saul who is now serving as the CCAB Chairperson to the Children’s Cabinet.

**Public Comments:** None