



Jeff Landry
Governor

State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DRUG POLICY

Dr. Shayla Polk, LCSW
Executive Director

Cortalya Muse, M.S., B.S.
Prevention Systems Manager

DRUG POLICY BOARD
July 31, 2025; 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
LA State Capitol, 4th Floor Press Room, 900 N. Third St., Baton Rouge

MINUTES

Call to Order

Shayla Polk, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Drug Policy and Chair of the Drug Policy Board, called the meeting to order at 10:07 AM.

Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Polk welcomed everyone to the Dr. Polk welcomed everyone to the third quarterly meeting of the Drug Policy Board. She then followed by a roll call for Voting and Of-Counsel members seated around the table. She invited stakeholders and members of the public to introduce themselves as well. After the introductions, Dr. Polk announced that quorum was achieved. A list of all members and attendees who attended the meeting is included at the end of the document.

Old Business

- *Review and approve minutes from previous meeting*

Dr. Polk asked everyone to refer to the minutes that were emailed prior to the meeting. While doing that, she reminded everyone that a copy of the minutes were in their packets. After a moment of silence to review, Dr. Polk asked if there were any edits or amendments to be made. A motion to approve was made by Lisa Freeman and seconded by Shayna Beevers Morvant. Vote by voice was made. All who were present agreed with the motion. None disagreed. None abstained.

New Business

A. Presentations with Open Discussions: Hemp Product Regulation in Louisiana - Commissioner Ernest Legier - The Louisiana Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control.

Commissioner Ernest Legier delivered a comprehensive overview of the historical development and current regulatory environment of hemp-derived products in Louisiana, with a particular focus on CBD and consumable hemp.

He shared that he played a key role in crafting both the original and enabling legislation for CBD in Louisiana. The initial proposal began as an agricultural bill developed in collaboration with then-House Speaker Clay Schexnayder with the intent of creating economic opportunities for Louisiana farmers through the cultivation and sale of hemp products. However, toward the end of that legislative session, it became evident that CBD products were already widely available on the

market, completely unregulated and, in many cases, containing levels of THC high enough to produce hallucinogenic effects. In response, a provisional regulatory framework was quickly assembled. This framework splits oversight responsibilities between the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) and the Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control (ATC). Under this system, LDH is tasked with approving product labels, evaluating contents, and generating a list of approved CBD products. ATC is responsible for issuing permits and conducting enforcement through field agents who verify that products on retail shelves are LDH-approved and compliant with state law.

Commissioner Legier noted that, like in traditional law enforcement, once a regulatory “vest” is created, individuals’ intent on skirting the law finds new ways to work around it. Since the original legislation, the statutes have required annual adjustments to close loopholes and maintain oversight in an ever-evolving market. He emphasized that CBD is increasingly being exploited as a vehicle to introduce illegal, hallucinogenic THC into the market, which continues to grow rapidly. With limited resources, 68 full-time staff, including just 30 field agents statewide, ATC’s capacity is being stretched thin as it works to address this growing public safety issue. Commissioner Legier also discussed the logistical burden of managing seized products. After outgrowing its existing storage facilities, including a shared space with the Louisiana Department of Revenue, ATC recently finalized contracts for eight additional storage units, which are already quickly filling up with illegal CBD and vape products.

In a conversation with Rebecca Chiasson, Chemistry Manager at the Louisiana State Police Crime Lab, he was asked whether ATC had identified a disposal solution for these materials. He responded that disposal remains an unresolved challenge, given the growing volume of confiscated products. He closed with a wry remark about the agency’s current focus: although ATC officially stands for Alcohol, Tobacco, and Control, the agency now spends much of its time regulating CBD and vape products, highlighting the evolving nature of its enforcement responsibilities.

Commissioner Legier also provided necessary clarification on what is currently legal in Louisiana regarding hemp-derived products. Under Louisiana law, CBD products may contain no more than 0.3% THC on a dry weight basis, aligning with federal definitions under the 2018 Farm Bill. These products must meet minimum standards established by the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), receive formal approval, and be placed on an LDH-maintained list of authorized products to be legally sold in the state. However, there are strict limitations on how these products can be consumed. In Louisiana today, CBD products cannot be sold in inhalable forms, and CBD-infused beverages are limited to no more than 5 milligrams of THC per 12-ounce container. These products must also be sold only through approved retail channels that follow ATC’s permitting and regulatory rules.

Commissioner Legier then shifted focus to definitions and clarifications introduced in recent legislation, which became effective January 1, 2024, through Act 752. He explained that this legislative update was crucial in establishing clear definitions around terms such as “*consumable hemp product*,” “*processor*,” and “*package*.” These changes were intended to eliminate ambiguity in enforcement and provide a more structured regulatory framework for all stakeholders involved in the production, sale, and oversight of hemp-derived products in Louisiana. One of the most significant updates under Act 752 consists of the restructuring of the permit system. The legislation now outlines specific classes of permits for businesses involved in the hemp product industry. Notably, bars and restaurants are no longer eligible to obtain new licenses for selling consumable hemp products. However, there is a grandfather provision in place that allows existing permit holders who were licensed before the implementation of Act 752 to retain their permits. Moving forward, no new licenses will be issued to bars or restaurants, effectively closing that avenue of access.

Commissioner Legier emphasized that the updated permitting structure more closely mirrors the regulatory rigor of alcohol licensing, noting the irony that it had historically been more challenging to obtain an alcohol permit than it was to sell consumable hemp products, which, in some formulations,

can have psychoactive effects like controlled substances. Additional provisions in the Act address: Restrictions on location (e.g., proximity to schools or sensitive areas), how and where products may be displayed within retail environments, and Limitations and responsibilities for wholesalers. Expanded penalty provisions for noncompliance, including fines, suspension, and potential revocation of permits. These changes reflect a growing recognition of the public health implications of hemp-derived intoxicants and a legislative effort to create parity between hemp regulation and other controlled substances like alcohol and tobacco, while maintaining consumer safety and market integrity.

A. Alcohol Awareness Month A Small Presentation – Dr. Shayla Polk, Executive Director, Office of Drug Policy

Dr. Polk gave a legislative update and informed members that a copy of all legislative updates was included in their meeting packets. She reviewed highlights from the 2025 Louisiana Regular Legislative Session, noting that several bills had been enacted into law or closely monitored due to their relevance to behavioral health, drug policy, and public safety.

House Bill 12 (Act No. 233)

Dr. Polk shared that this Act established a misdemeanor offense for selling or distributing consumable hemp products that fail to comply with Louisiana regulations, particularly those sold to individuals under 21. She explained that the legislation aimed to protect youth and ensure public safety by enforcing stricter compliance measures for hemp products. The bill was signed by the Governor on June 11, 2025, and became effective on August 1, 2025.

House Bill 15 (Act No. 121)

Dr. Polk covered that this Act added three synthetic substances, N-Desethyl isotonitazene, Etonitazepipne, and Ethylphenidate, to Schedule I of Louisiana's Uniform Controlled Dangerous Substances Law. She noted that these substances have a high abuse potential and no accepted medical use. The bill was signed in June 2025 and became effective on August 1, 2025, strengthening Louisiana's response to synthetic opioid and stimulant misuse.

House Bill 384 (Act No. 497)

Dr. Polk discussed how this Act strengthened disciplinary measures for students found in possession of controlled or prohibited substances on school campuses. She stated that it established uniform protocols for investigation, notification, and disciplinary action while encouraging collaboration with mental health professionals. The bill became law without the Governor's signature on June 30, 2025, and took effect on August 1, 2025.

House Bill 412 (Act No. 274)

Dr. Polk noted that this Act regulated the manufacture, sale, and distribution of alternative nicotine products, including e-cigarettes and vape devices. It prohibited sales to anyone under 21, required age verification, and imposed labeling, packaging, and advertising restrictions to protect youth. The bill was signed by the Governor on June 15, 2025, and became effective on August 1, 2025.

Senate Bill 78 (Act No. 102)

Dr. Polk shared that this Act expanded the legal definition of drug paraphernalia and strengthened penalties for possession and distribution. She stated that it provided clearer statutory language, enhanced enforcement capabilities, and addressed emerging devices such as modified vaping products. The bill was signed by the Governor on June 10, 2025, and became effective on August 1, 2025.

Senate Bill 98 (Act No. 106)

Dr. Polk reported that this Act added nitrous oxide, commonly known as laughing gas, to Louisiana's Controlled Dangerous Substances Act. It imposed criminal penalties for unauthorized sale or possession and required permits for legitimate uses such as medical or culinary purposes. The bill was signed by the Governor on June 10, 2025, and became effective on August 1, 2025.

Senate Bill 154 (Act No. 41)

Dr. Polk highlighted that this Act criminalized the possession and distribution of kratom, classifying it as a controlled substance under agricultural law. She explained that penalties ranged from fines of \$1,000 to \$5,000 and imprisonment of up to five years, depending on the offense severity. The measure aimed to reduce unregulated kratom use due to its psychoactive effects and potential health risks. The bill was signed by the Governor on May 7, 2025, and became effective on August 1, 2025.

Dr. Polk added that additional bills not discussed during the meeting, but included in the packet, that were related to the Governor's Task Force on Impaired Driving. A detailed legislative breakdown will be provided during the upcoming Task Force on Impaired Driving meeting. A full list of legislative bills tracked by the Office of Drug Policy is available upon request.

Other Business

A. Office of Drug Policy updates

Dr. Polk gave a brief update, noting the upcoming Board Meetings.

Member agency updates

Dr. Emily Tilley with O'Brien House addressed the group to highlight that September is National Recovery Month. She announced that O'Brien House will be hosting its inaugural Recovery Walk to raise awareness and support for individuals in recovery as well as their annual Recovery Breakfast.

Susan Dupont with Department of Education provided information regarding BESE and Act 497, which outlines the legal definitions and requirements related to marijuana use. She noted that a related session will be held on August 20th to discuss the law and its implications further.

Public Comments

Rebecca Chiasson with the Louisiana State Police shared information from a preliminary technical report examining Oregon's marijuana and hemp markets a decade after legalization. The report, developed by the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, reviewed various regulatory issues such as product potency, labeling, and pesticide compliance. It involved collecting and analyzing 151 cannabis samples to evaluate the accuracy of labeling, THC content, and potential contamination concerns across both hemp and marijuana products.

A copy of this report was included in the meeting handouts.

Upcoming Meetings

- State Epidemiology Workgroup- August 7, 2025, @10 AM- 12 PM Virtual/Teams
- Task Force on Impaired Driving August 6, 2025 (10 AM- 12 PM) LA Capitol 4th Floor Press Room
- Prevention Systems Committee- September 3, 2025, Virtual/Zoom/Teams
- Heroin and Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) Council- October 9, 2025, House Committee Room- Louisiana State Capitol
- **Drug Policy Board- TBA (10 AM- 12 PM) LA Capitol 4th Floor Press Room**

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 P.M.

DRUG POLICY BOARD VOTING MEMEBERS

Member Agency	Appointee/Designee	In Attendance	Not in Attendance	Proxy
Alcohol industry representative	Kody Thompson	Yes		
Attorney General's Office	Michael Dupree, Public Protection Division (John Kelley Proxy-Complex Litigation Officer)	Yes		
Board of Pharmacy	Marty McKay (Joe Fontenot proxy)	Yes		
District Court Judge	Shayna Beevers Morvant	Yes		
Federal agency with AOD ed/treat/Prev responsibilities	Dr. Leslie Faulkner	Yes		
Board of Regents	Dr. Allison Smith	Yes		
Governor's Office of Drug Policy	Dr. Shayla Polk, Director and Chair of the Drug Policy Board	Yes		
House member, Committee on Health and Welfare	Rhonda Butler, LA State Representative, Dist. 38		No	
O'Brien House	Dr. Emily Tilley	Yes		
Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement	Linda Gautier	Yes		
Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services	Dr. Rebecca Hook	Yes		
Louisiana Department of Education	Michael Comeaux (Susan Dupont as Proxy)	Yes		
Louisiana Department of Health	Quinetta Womack(Proxy Leslie Freeman)	Yes		
Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections	Shelley Edgerton	Yes		
Louisiana District Attorneys Association	J. Collin Simms (Elizabeth Authement as Proxy)	Yes		
Louisiana Highway Safety Commission	Lisa Freeman, JD			
Louisiana Office of Alcohol & Tobacco Control	Ernest Legier (Deatrice Henderson as Proxy)	Yes		
Louisiana Public Defenders Board	Remy Starns, JD	Yes		
Louisiana Sheriffs' Association	Shannon Dirmann		No	
Louisiana State Police	Rebecca Chiasson	Yes		
National Guard	Lt. Colonel Beverly Coutto, Coordinator, Counterdrug Program (MSgt Amy Thomas as proxy)			Yes
Physician	Peter W. Croughan, MD, LA Department of Health		No	
Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court Office	Fletcher D. Hyacinth	Yes		
Senate member, Committee on Health and Welfare	Senator Bob Owens- District 1		No	
Avenues Recovery	Matt Engler		No	
TOTAL PRESENT		19(Quorum was achieved)		

OF-COUNCIL MEMBERS

Member Agency	Appointee/Designee	In Attendance
LA State Board of Medical Examiners	Dr. Vincent Culotta	No
North Louisiana Criminalistics Laboratory	Joseph O. Jones, System Director	Yes
Baton Rouge Field	Steven Hofer, Asst. Special Agent in Charge	Yes
ADAPT, Inc.	Thomas R. "Rusty" Fornea, Executive Director	No
Seymore D'Fair Foundation-Ofc	Dara Lemoine-Johnson (Craig Wiles Proxy)	Yes
15 th JDC	Judge Valerie Garret	No
Drug Enforcement Administration, NOLA Office	Keith Bakewell	No
Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area	Greg Lowther	Yes

STAFF

Cortalya Muse, Governor's Office

GUESTS

Catherine Childers, Louisiana Highway Safety Commission

David Johnson, Seymore's Foundation

Mark Hiatt, NOPD Crime Lab

Tracy Lemaire, National Safety Council

Jacqueline Sanchez, LDAA

Joshua Blossom, LA National Guard Counterdrug

Bridget Bailey, Tangipahoa Parish Government

Taylor Addison, Tangipahoa Parish Government

Melinda Williams, Office of Behavioral Health

Gaylin Mull, TRACC Coalition

Cali LeBlanc, TPG

Andrew Burns, N/A

Kara Kennedy, LANG Counterdrug

Dana Wilkosz, CDCF/LPH

Tranettea Williams, LDH/BHI

Shannon Robertson, Louisiana Primary Care Association

Paola Ochoa, ATC

Ami Moles, LSU

Judith Rhodes, LSU