



Jeff Landry  
Governor

# State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
DRUG POLICY

Dr. Shayla Polk, LCSW  
Director

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

**DRUG POLICY BOARD**  
**April 17, 2025; 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM**  
**LA State Capitol, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Press Room, 900 N. Third St., Baton Rouge**

## MINUTES

### **Call to Order**

Dr. 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 10:20 AM

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Dr. Polk welcomed everyone to the second quarterly meeting of the Drug Policy Board. She then requested that Voting and Of-Counsel members, stakeholders, and members of the public introduce themselves. Dr. Polk announced that the quorum had been met, with 13 members present.

### **Old Business**

- *Review and approve minutes from the previous meeting*

Per the guidelines outlined in Robert's Rules of Order, the minutes from the previous meeting were motioned, seconded, and approved by the voting body. There were 13 voting members present, constituting a quorum. The motion to approve the minutes passed without objection.

### **New Business**

#### **A. HB 316- Dr. Shayla Polk, Executive Director, Office of Drug Policy**

Dr. Shayla Polk presented an overview of House Bill 316, which had been introduced to modernize and restructure the state's Drug Policy Board. She explained that HB 316 revised outdated terminology, replacing words like "abuse" with "misuse" to align with a more compassionate and evidence-based approach to substance-related issues. The bill expanded the board's membership from 23 to 25 members, incorporating more diverse perspectives by adding a representative from the Board of Regents specializing in collegiate recovery, an individual in long-term recovery actively engaged in prevention and peer support, the Executive Director of the Office of Drug Policy or a designee, and the Director of the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court Office or a designee. At the same time, the bill removed specific roles, including the executive director of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and a representative of a federal agency involved in substance abuse education or prevention. Dr. Polk noted that HB 316 broadened the board's

responsibilities beyond enforcement to include harm reduction, peer support, rehabilitation, and public awareness. It also established a requirement for an annual report to be submitted by July 1, with quarterly updates as deemed necessary. Additionally, all state agencies and political subdivisions were now expected to provide support to the board at no cost, within the limits of their budgets. Dr. Polk concluded that HB 316 positioned the board to become more inclusive, collaborative, and effective in advancing the state's efforts to address substance misuse and promote recovery.

- B. 2025 Legislative Bills - Dr. Shayla Polk, Executive Director, Office of Drug Policy-** Dr. Shayla Polk provided an overview of various 2025 legislative bills currently under consideration that address a wide range of drug policy issues. These include proposals to regulate and tax consumable hemp and cannabis products; expand the Uniform Controlled Dangerous Substances Law; establish safer handling protocols for fentanyl; enhance mental health services and screenings in schools and communities; adjust penalties related to DWI and drug paraphernalia; and revise regulations surrounding alcohol, tobacco, and alternative nicotine products. Additional bills focus on drug policy governance, support for victims of sex trafficking, behavioral health rehabilitation services, and youth-focused pilot programs. Collectively, these measures aim to strengthen public health frameworks, treatment services, and enforcement mechanisms across the state. The handout discussed in the meeting is attached below for the minutes.

Instrument	Author	Current Status	Considered
25RS - HB12	SCHLEGEL	Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice	
CRIME/MISDEMEANOR: Provides relative to the sale of consumable hemp products (OR SEE FISC NOTE EX)			
25RS - HB15	MACK	Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice	
CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES: Adds certain substances to the Uniform Controlled Dangerous Substances Law			
25RS - HB36	SCHLEGEL	Pending House Civil Law and Procedure	
LIABILITY/CIVIL: Provides relative to consumable hemp			
25RS -HB156	MACK	Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice	
DRUGS/ILLEGAL: Provides relative to the safe handling of fentanyl following an arrest			
25RS -HB176	FIRMENT	Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice	
DRUGS: Provides relative to regulation of certain hallucinogenic chemicals (OR GF EX See Note)			
25RS -HB182	BAGLEY	Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice	

DWI: Provides relative to penalties for the crime of operating a vehicle while impaired			
25RS -HB187	FONTENOT		Pending House Ways and Means
TAX/EXCISE: Increases the rate of excise tax on consumable hemp products			
25RS -HB202	BOYD		Pending House Education
HIGHER EDUCATION: Provides for a privacy waiver relative to certain mental health information of postsecondary education students			
25RS -HB212	ORGERON		Pending House Judiciary
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES: Provides relative to container sizes for beverages of high alcohol content			
25RS -HB235	ECHOLS		Pending House Ways and Means
TAX/EXCISE: Increases the excise tax levied on consumable hemp products and dedicates revenues collected from the tax			
25RS -HB253	BOYER	Pending House Health and Welfare	Considered 4/16/25
DRUGS: Provides relative to kratom (OR INCREASE SG EX See Note)			
25RS -HB316	BUTLER	Pending House Health and Welfare	Considered 4/16/25
BOARDS/COMMISSIONS: Provides for the Drug Policy Board			
25RS -HB359	DUSTIN MILLER		Pending House Health and Welfare
MENTAL HEALTH: Provides relative to the mental health treatment of victims of human sex trafficking			
25RS -HB398	BRASS		Pending House Ways and Means
TAX/TOBACCO TAX: Increases the tax levied on smokeless tobacco and dedicates a portion of the tax to the Youth Cessation and Prevention Fund			
25RS -HB403	TURNER		Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice
FUNDS/FUNDING: Provides for the imposition of fines for driving offenses (OR INCREASE SD RV See Note)			
25RS -HB412	ROMERO		Pending House Judiciary
TOBACCO/TOBACCO PRODUCTS: Provides relative to alternative nicotine products			
Instrument	Author	Current Status	Considered
25RS -HB486	FISHER		Pending House Education
HEALTH: Requires public schools to offer a mental health assessment to certain students (OR INCREASE LF EX See Note)			
25RS -HB517	BRASS		Pending House Ways and Means
TAX/TOBACCO TAX: Increases the excise tax levied on vapor products and electronic cigarettes and changes the basis of the tax to a percentage of the invoice price of these products			

25RS -HB519	GLORIOSO	Pending House Transportation, Highways, and Public Works
MTR VEHICLE/VIOLATIONS: Provides relative to the operation of a motor vehicle while using a wireless telecommunication device (OR SEE FISC NOTE LF RV)		
25RS -HB546	KNOX	Pending House Judiciary
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE PERMT: Provides with respect to the issuance of alcoholic beverage permits		
25RS -HB584	LYONS	Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice
JUVENILES: Provides relative to the Back on Track Youth Pilot Program		
25RS -HB619	KNOX	Pending House Health and Welfare
MENTAL HEALTH: Provides relative to group and community homes		
25RS -HB627	NEWELL	Pending House Administration of Criminal Justice
HEALTH: Provides for the Louisiana Cannabis Pilot Program		
25RS -HB636	JORDAN	Pending House Ways and Means
TAX/EXCISE: Levies an excise tax on cannabis and provides for the use of monies derived from the tax		
25RS - SB42	SELDERS	Pending Senate Insurance
HEALTH CARE: Provides relative to perinatal behavioral health treatment. (8/1/25)		
25RS - SB78	MYERS	Pending Senate final passage
CONTROL DANGER SUBSTANCE: Provides relative to drug paraphernalia. (gov sig)		
25RS - SB98	MYERS	Pending Senate final passage
CONTROL DANGER SUBSTANCE: Increases the penalties for the retail sale of nitrous oxide. (8/1/25)		
25RS -SB121	SELDERS	Pending Senate Education
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: Provides for mental health screenings in schools. (8/1/25) (OR INCREASE LF EX SeeNote)		
25RS -SB153	SELDERS	Pending Senate Health and Welfare
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: Provides relative to behavioral health rehabilitation services in the Louisiana medical assistance program. (gov sig)		
25RS -SB174	JACKSON-ANDREWS	Pending Senate Health and Welfare
PUBLIC HEALTH: Provides relative to screening pregnant women for HIV and syphilis. (gov sig)		
25RS -SB215	SELDERS	Pending Senate Education

COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES: Provides for mental health days for faculty, staff, and students in public education institutions. (8/1/25)
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**C. Presentation with Open Discussion: Enhancing Your Understanding: Dissociative Anesthetics Focal Point: Ketamine- Dr. Joey Jones- North Louisiana Criminalistics Crime Lab**

Dr. Joseph O. Jones, a forensic toxicologist from the North Louisiana Criminalistics Laboratory, delivered an educational presentation focused on ketamine as a dissociative anesthetic. He clarified that his role centered on toxicological research and the interpretation of human performance, not clinical administration or prescribing.

Dr. Jones provided a historical timeline of ketamine's development and use, noting its FDA approval in 1970 and its extensive deployment in battlefield and veterinary settings. Over the decades, its use evolved to include off-label applications for treatment-resistant depression, PTSD, and chronic pain, and it was formally approved in 2019 in the form of esketamine nasal spray. He contrasted ketamine's therapeutic applications with its illicit use, particularly in recreational settings, where it is often referred to as "*Special K*." Dr. Jones discussed the "K-hole" phenomenon, a dissociative experience resulting from high doses, usually associated with hallucinations and detachment.

A significant focus of the presentation was the role of ketamine in impaired driving (DUID) cases. Dr. Jones highlighted national and regional trends, with specific attention to North Louisiana and New York City, where ketamine had increasingly appeared in non-medical contexts. He cited data showing its presence in combination with other substances like cannabinoids, alcohol, benzodiazepines, and stimulants in DUID fatalities.

Dr. Jones also addressed the growing number of ketamine clinics and telehealth-based treatment programs, some of which had raised concerns about misuse, self-medication, and diversion. He referenced a DEA case involving a single doctor who prescribed ketamine to over 3,000 patients across 44 states within three years, prompting regulatory shutdowns.

In conclusion, Dr. Jones emphasized the complex intersection between ketamine's medical promise and public safety risks, urging caution and more profound understanding, especially in forensic and law enforcement contexts. He answered questions from the board and provided contact information for further inquiry.

**Other Business**

**A. Office of Drug Policy updates**

Dr. Shayla Polk shared details about the upcoming 2nd Annual Substance Misuse, Mental Health, and Suicide Prevention Day at the Capitol, scheduled for May 8, 2025. This important event will focus on raising awareness and fostering statewide collaboration around urgent behavioral health priorities.

Governor Landry is expected to deliver a video message officially proclaiming May as Mental Health Awareness Month. The event will feature a panel of subject matter experts covering key topics including substance misuse prevention, the intersection of faith and mental health, collegiate recovery, and access to behavioral health services. Attendees will be invited to participate in a Q&A session following the panel, allowing them to engage in meaningful, solution-focused dialogue.

To support community engagement, Dr. Polk and the Office of Drug Policy will provide mental health resource bags and refreshments. The event is designed to cultivate education, prevention, and connection, placing the well-being of individuals, families, and communities across Louisiana at the center. Dr. Polk shared that this day will serve as a powerful continuation of the Office's commitment to behavioral health equity and collaborative action statewide.

**B. Member agency updates**

No other agency updates

***Public Comments***

No Public Comments

***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 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Press Room
- Prevention Systems Committee- September 3, 2025, Virtual/Zoom/Teams
- Heroin and Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) Council- July 10, 2025
- **Drug Policy Board- July 31, 2025 (10 AM- 12 PM) LA Capitol 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Press Room**

***Adjournment***

## MEETING ATTENDEES

### MEMBERS

Member Agency	Appointee/Designee	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	Vacant	--	
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	Stephanie Berault, LA State Representative, Dist. 76	No	
Louisiana Commission on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse	Vacant/Comm does not exist	--	
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	No	
Louisiana Department of Health	Quinetta Womack	Yes	
Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections	Blake LeBlanc		
Louisiana District Attorneys Association	J. Collin Simms	Yes	
Louisiana Highway Safety Commission	Lisa Freeman, JD	Yes	
Louisiana Office of Alcohol & Tobacco Control	Ernest Legier, JD, Commissioner (Paola Ochoa as Proxy)	Yes	
Louisiana Public Defenders Board	Remy Starns, JD	Yes	
Louisiana Sheriffs' Association	Shannon Dirmann		
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	
Private organization involved in SA prevention	Dan Schneider, RPH Tunnel of Hope	No	
Senate member, Committee on Health and Welfare	Senator Bob Owens- District 1	No	

**OF-COUNSEL MEMBERS**

<b>Member Agency</b>	<b>Appointee/Designee</b>	<b>In Attendance</b>	<b>Proxy</b>
LA State Board of Medical Examiners	Dr. Vincent Culotta		
O'Brien House	Emily George Tilley, LCSW-BACS, Director	Yes	
Louisiana Board of Regents	Dr. Allison Smith		
North Louisiana Criminalistics Laboratory	Joseph O. Jones, System Director	Yes	
Baton Rouge Field	Steven Hofer, Asst. Special Agent in Charge		
ADAPT, Inc.	Thomas R. "Rusty" Fornea, Executive Director		
Seymore D'Fair Foundation-Ofc	Dara Lemoine-Johnson (Craig Wiles-Proxy)	Yes	
15 <sup>th</sup> JDC- Ofc	Judge Valerie Garret		

**ATTENDEES**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>
Catherine Childers	<b>Louisiana Highway Safety Commission</b>
Tranettea Williams	<b>Office of Public Health/BHI</b>
Melinda Williams	<b>Office of Behavioral Health</b>
Marty McKay	<b>Louisiana Board of Pharmacy</b>
Shelley Edgerton	<b>Louisiana Department of Corrections</b>

**STAFF**

Cortalya Muse- **Governor's Office of Drug Policy**