

**Subcommittee on Mental Health of House Committee on Health and Welfare**

Minutes of Meeting  
2023 Interim  
November 9, 2023

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Representative Laurie Schlegel, chairman of the Subcommittee on Mental Health of House Committee on Health and Welfare, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Representative Laurie Schlegel, chairman  
Representative Michael Charles Echols  
Representative Jason Hughes  
Representative Ed Larvadain, III  
Representative Larry Selders  
Representative Joseph A. Stagni  
Representative Christopher Turner, vice chairman

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Representative Roy Daryl Adams  
Representative Wayne McMahan

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Meah Johnson, attorney  
Taylor Chrisman, attorney  
Kristy Neubrandner, committee administrative assistant

**ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:**

Representative Adrian Fisher  
Alicia Powell, committee administrative assistant  
Nevonda Reed, division director  
Danny Leming, assistant chief sergeant at arms  
Myrtis Jarrell, sergeant at arms

### **III. BUSINESS**

#### **Discussion on mental healthcare services for children, adolescents, and young adults and the accessibility of such services by the following invited boards and organizations:**

##### **Louisiana Mental Health Association**

Ruby Noble Evans, Louisiana Mental Health Association, 632 Orion Avenue, Metairie, LA 70005, spoke for information only. She explained to the committee what a quality system of mental health care should look like for young people. Ms. Noble's comments prompted numerous questions from the committee members, all of which she addressed, regarding the various discrepancies across the state in addressing the mental health issues young people face.

##### **Department of Education**

Ken Bradford, Department of Education (DOE), 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only and presented a slideshow, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records.

Michael Comeaux, DOE, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only.

Ethan Melancon, DOE, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only.

The panel responded to inquiries from the committee concerning Medicaid reimbursement rates, mandates imposed on the department by the Board of Secondary and Elementary Education, and the number of qualified full-time and part-time school personnel in place across the state who offer mental health care to students.

Alma Stewart Allen, Louisiana Center for Health Equity, P.O. Box 82637, Baton Rouge, LA 70884, spoke for information only. Ms. Allen described the key findings in a report that was emailed to the committee prior to the meeting. The report was prepared by the Louisiana Center for Health Equity in response to House Resolution No. 173 of the 2022 Regular Session, which authorized the creation of the Student Behavior, Mental Health, and Discipline Task Force. The Louisiana Center for Health Equity was designated as the convener of the task force.

##### **Communities in Schools Gulf South**

Erin Sims, Communities in Schools Gulf South, 3400 Bienville Street, Suite B, New Orleans, LA 70119, spoke for information only and provided a handout, Exhibit B, which is included in the

committee records. Ms. Sims presented a slideshow, Exhibit C, which is included in the committee records.

### **Louisiana Board of Regents**

Kim Hunter Reed, Louisiana Board of Regents (BOR), 1201 North Third Street, Suite 6-200, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only and presented a slideshow, Exhibit D, which is included in the committee records.

Allison Smith, BOR, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 6-200, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. She continued with the presentation of the slideshow that Ms. Reed initiated.

The committee stood at ease at 11:53 a.m. The committee reconvened at 12:07 p.m.

The panel addressed the committee's questions regarding the specific challenges college students encounter in accessing mental health care within the school setting.

### **Louisiana Community and Technical College System**

Chandler LeBoeuf, Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), 265 South Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, spoke for information only. He provided a concise overview of LCTCS and elaborated on the system's commitment to assisting students facing mental health challenges. He also highlighted how the system collaborates with faculty and staff to ensure preparedness when encountering a student in need of mental health care.

Amy Cable, LCTCS, 265 South Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, spoke for information only. She provided details on how LCTCS prioritizes connecting students with mental health resources. Additionally, she discussed how the system allocates funding to increase the presence of mental health professionals on campuses.

### **Department of Children and Family Services**

Amanda Brunson, Department of Children and Family Services, 627 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. She explained to the committee the fundamental reasons most children receive services from the department. Furthermore, she addressed questions from the committee regarding placement disruptions and the shortage of providers.

Witness cards submitted by individuals who did not speak are as follows: 1 for information only. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

**Office of Juvenile Justice**

Krystal Stevens, Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ), 7919 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, spoke for information only and provided a handout, Exhibit E, which is included in the committee records. She presented a slideshow, Exhibit F, which is included in the committee records.

Denise Dandridge, OJJ, 7919 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, spoke for information only. She continued with the presentation/slideshow.

Gearry T. Williams, OJJ, 7919 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, spoke for information only. He continued with the presentation/slideshow.

Tennia Williams, OJJ, 7919 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, spoke for information only. She continued with the presentation/slideshow.

In response to questions from the committee, the panel emphasized the significance of parent and school involvement along with diversion programs and alternatives to detention as the most effective methods to prevent youth from progressing through the system.

Representative Schlegel invited those in attendance who wished to provide public testimony unrelated to items on the agenda to address the committee.

Corhonda Corley, Louisiana Families of Individuals with Disabilities, 8815 Wilmore Drive, Zachary, LA 70791, spoke for information only. She described the lack of services for children with disabilities within the public school systems in Louisiana.

Statements submitted in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee are as follows: 3 for information only. Copies of these statements are included in the committee records.

**IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Representative Schlegel announced that the next meeting of the Subcommittee on Mental Health will be held on December 13, 2023.

## V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Turner offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 4 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Schlegel, Echols, Hughes, and Turner voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Laurie Schlegel  
Subcommittee on Mental Health of House Committee on Health and Welfare

Date adopted: March 21, 2024