

Subcommittee on Mental Health of House Committee on Health and Welfare

Minutes of Meeting
2023 Interim
December 13, 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 10:04 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Laurie Schlegel, chairman
Representative Roy Daryl Adams
Representative Michael Charles Echols
Representative Larry Selders
Representative Joseph A. Stagni
Representative Christopher Turner, vice chairman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Jason Hughes
Representative Ed Larvadain, III
Representative Wayne McMahan

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Representative Larry Bagley, chairman of the House Committee on Health and Welfare
Myrtis Jarrell, sergeant at arms
Jaimie Mathews, committee administrative assistant
Nevonda Reed, division director

III. BUSINESS

Follow-up discussion on mental healthcare services for children, adolescents, and young adults by the following individual:

Dr. John de Back, Psychiatrist

John de Back, Louisiana Psychiatric Medical Association, 18622 Montclair Court, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, spoke for information only and provided a handout, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records.

The committee recessed at 10:13 a.m. The committee reconvened at 10:39 a.m.

Dr. de Back spoke to the committee about the need for an expansion of bed capacity for juveniles in psychiatric treatment facilities.

Tony Lambert, Delta Behavioral Health, 401 Pine Street, Monroe, LA 71201, spoke for information only. Mr. Lambert described to the committee his concerns about Louisiana's Coordinated System of Care and its wraparound services.

Discussion on preventative strategies and ways to help those affected by addiction and the relationship between mental health and addiction in the criminal justice system by the following department and organizations:

Louisiana Sheriffs' Association

Shannon Dilmann, Louisiana Sheriff's Association, 1175 Nicholson Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. Ms. Dilmann highlighted the shortage of resources required for adequately training deputies in identifying and addressing mental health crises before they escalate.

Dennis Grimes, East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office, 8900 Jimmy Wedell Dr, Baton Rouge, LA 70807, spoke for information only. Mr. Grimes introduced himself as the warden of the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison. Mr. Grimes explained the existing training protocol for prison workers aimed at identifying and managing mental health crises. Additionally, he highlighted the insufficient training resources that the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison contends with.

Alexis Anderson, East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Reform Coalition, 804 Main Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, spoke for information only. Ms. Anderson addressed the committee concerning the shortage of beds for individuals with behavioral disorders.

Louisiana District Attorneys Association

Kristine Russell, Louisiana District Attorneys Association, 103 Maronge Street, Suite A, Thibodaux, LA 70301, spoke for information only. Ms. Russell detailed to the committee the operational aspects of the Pretrial Intervention program, emphasizing its role in offering intervention and a second chance through rehabilitative services.

Louisiana Drug and Specialty Courts, Louisiana Supreme Court

Johanna Braud, Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court, 400 Royal Street, New Orleans, LA 70130, spoke for information only. Ms. Braud highlighted to the committee the necessity for increased preventive services within the community to divert individuals away from the Louisiana Drug and Specialty Courts.

Melissa Carter, 24th Judicial District Specialty Courts, 802 Second Street, Gretna, LA 70053, spoke for information only. Ms. Carter provided the committee with an overview of the various specialty courts, including their functions, concerns, and specific needs.

Department of Public Safety and Corrections

Ashleigh Fleming, Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPS and C), 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. Ms. Fleming explained to the committee the mission of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections. Additionally, she emphasized the need for resources to improve communication and collaboration among state agencies, particularly in ensuring ongoing support for individuals once they are released from incarceration.

Randy Lavespere, (DPS and C), 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. Mr. Lavespere talked about the significant rise in the use of anti-psychotic medications by prisoners over the last 15 years. He explained that this surge has created a demand for more professionals within prison systems who specialize in assisting individuals with mental health issues.

Blaise LeBlanc, (DPS and C), 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only. Mr. LeBlanc addressed the issue of prisons lacking the capacity to accommodate the growing number of available treatment programs for prisoners.

Coalition of Louisiana Addiction Services and Prevention Providers

Lonnie Granier, Coalition of Louisiana Addiction Services and Prevention Providers (CLASPP), 1125 North Tonti Street, New Orleans, LA 70119, spoke for information only and presented a slideshow, Exhibit B, which is included in the committee records.

Edward Carlson, Odyssey House, 1125 North Tonti Street, New Orleans, LA 70119, spoke for information only and provided a handout, Exhibit C, which is included in the committee records.

Louisiana Addiction Treatment Providers

Stephen Wright, Louisiana Addiction Treatment Providers (LATP), 2700 Beaumont Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, spoke for information only. He introduced his fellow presenters and outlined the plan for how the panel intended to deliver their presentation.

Rob Rayford, LATP, 2700 Beaumont Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, spoke for information only. Mr. Rayford explained to the committee why he founded LATP. He also outlined the different needs among treatment providers, specifically addressing the differences between non-profit and for-profit providers, as well as the differences between rural and metropolitan providers.

Bobby Rayford, Edgefield Recovery, 2700 Beaumont Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, spoke for information only. Mr. Rayford stressed the importance of support groups in helping recovering addicts from going into a relapse.

The panel emphasized the importance of allocating funds for mental health and addiction treatment services in House Bill No. 1 during the upcoming 2024 legislative session and urged the committee to prioritize these resources.

Tony Landry, Veterans Action Council, 805 Genevieve Drive, Lafayette, LA 70503, spoke for information only. He advocated for the use of natural plant medicines such as cannabis, ayahuasca, ibogaine, psilocybin, and other psychedelic plants and fungi to treat addiction, depression, and anxiety.

Bill Richard, Blue Basin Canna, 112 West Vermilion Street, Lafayette, LA 70501, spoke for information only. Mr. Richard advocated for the use of cannabis as a treatment option for veterans grappling with mental health issues.

GRACE (Guiding Recovery and Creating Empowerment) Program

Representative Schlegel announced that there would not be a presentation by the GRACE Program.

Statements submitted in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee are as follows: 4 for information only. Copies of these statements are included in the committee records.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Representative Schlegel announced that this would be the last meeting of the Subcommittee on Mental Health before the start of the 2024 Regular Session.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Turner offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 5 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Schlegel, Adams, Echols, Stagni, and Turner voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Date adopted: March 21, 2024