



Louisiana Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired

Business Office and Human Resources

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October 17, 2016

Mr. Jay Dardenne
Commissioner of Administration
Division of Administration
P.O. Box 94095
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9095

RE: LSDVI Report, pursuant to HCR 25, 2016 Regular Legislative Session

Dear Commissioner Dardenne:

House Concurrent Resolution 25 of the 2016 Regular Session of the Legislature urges and requests departments to submit a report to the Task Force on Structural Changes in Budget and Tax Policy which outlines the initiatives the Department will take to ensure a more efficient operation for fiscal year 2016-2017 and beyond. This letter serves as the **Louisiana Schools for the Deaf & Visually Impaired's** report to the Task Force.

LSDVI has been a particularly proactive agency in working to help the state by finding operational efficiencies. LSD and LSVI put forth a plan to merge the two agencies into one, and this plan became a reality in FY11. The two schools now operate from a single shared campus and are sharing many of the support services needed to operate a school (i.e. transportation, security, food service, health services, admissions & records, maintenance, finance & administrative services, etc.), which has enabled a considerable reduction in staff and has generated ongoing savings. Over the last eight years, LSDVI has reduced its T.O. count by 30% and has generated over \$5M in recurring savings. In addition, LSDVI has had a much lower growth rate over the last decade than most other agencies. Given our size, relative to other budget units within the state, LSDVI's past contributions are significant.

As a state school, LSDVI is able to provide high quality, free & appropriate educational & related services to students with low-incidence exceptionalities (visual/ hearing impairment), in a much more cost effective manner than could be provided in each individual school district throughout Louisiana. Besides the issue of cost, resource availability becomes an issue. As a matter of reality, even with the best of intentions and unlimited funding, LEAs would not be able to staff a sufficient number of HI/VI certified instructors, interpreters, and Braille/large print materials because these resources are not available in sufficient numbers. In addition to educational and residential services, LSDVI also serves as a statewide resource center for visual/hearing assessments, LSDVI provides Outreach services to families around the state, and LSDVI operates the LA Instructional Materials Center (LIMC) which makes Braille materials available to visually impaired students statewide.

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This year, we continue to look for operational efficiencies that will result in cost savings, while still maintaining an effective & safe learning environment for our students. Below are a few of the areas in which we have already made changes and/or will examine for potential cost savings this year:

- Last fiscal year, LSDVI took a critical look at its professional contracts and as a result, identified contracts that could be eliminated or reduced. Renegotiated contracts for FY17 have resulted in reductions of over \$50,000 this year. Medicaid billing was brought back in-house, with no additional staff costs.
- LSDVI is sharing legal/policy services with LSEC and SSD, to achieve savings for all three entities.
- Seeking to maximize the use of federal/non-state funds, while maintaining the required level of state effort to utilize those federal dollars.
- Out-of-state travel in FY17 will be limited to student activities and only absolutely critical staff travel. Should the need arise for staff to travel out-of-state, other means of finance (rather than state general fund) will be utilized.
- To the extent possible, weekend events will be eliminated and re-scheduled within the school week, to reduce additional staffing, utilities and other costs.
- Where possible, LSDVI is refurbishing equipment instead of purchasing new equipment (i.e. swing sets, mules, etc.)
- Ensuring that preventive maintenance is done regularly. Ongoing maintenance of the campus is imperative for student safety and also helps to diminish future costs by prolonging the useful life of state assets.

We will continue to seek additional opportunities to achieve savings and efficiencies throughout this fiscal year and beyond. LSDVI will continue to exercise good stewardship of the funding appropriated for our students with exceptionalities. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the students of our state.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact me at 225-757-3200.

Sincerely,



Ralph Thibodeaux, Superintendent
LA Special Schools

C Patrick Goldsmith, House Fiscal Division
Sherri Hymel, Senate Finance Committee
John Carpenter, Legislative Fiscal Office
David R. Poytner, Legislative Research Library
Task Force on Structural Changes in Budget and Tax Policy