

Children's Special Health Services

Administrative changes: DHH Secretary Alan Levine has named a new Assistant Secretary for the Office of Public Health. As of January 18 the position will be filled by Clayton Williams, who is currently at LPHI and who recently oversaw the \$100 million Medical Home stabilization grant, which has resulted in 40 medical practices in the Greater New Orleans area being NCQA certified level 1 Medical Homes. Clayton is an EMT who has an MPH from Tulane and is currently working on his DrPH in health systems management. Dr. Rony Francois, our current Assistant Secretary, will oversee a comprehensive effort to improve LA birth outcomes.

Within CSHS, we are losing our budget and contracts person as of December 31 and will be permitted to fill this position, despite the freeze. This is a critical position for us and we hope to fill it soon. We are also losing an audiologist in Region 2 (Baton Rouge) that served regions 2, 3 and 7. This person is retiring early, hence we will lose the position unless an exemption is granted. That leaves only 2 audiologists statewide. Our audiologists screen and evaluate children for hearing loss, provide hearing aids, and coordinate appropriate early intervention for these children. This is an important service since in many areas of the state there are no private audiologists who fit hearing aids. We hope the exemption is granted.

Children's Special Health Services: We received our final written report from the Maternal Child Health Bureau that our CSHS program is "very strong". In particular they mentioned our Medical Home project. Our National Performance Measure is that "CSHCN will receive care coordination in the medical home" and so we are enabling this by placing care coordinators in private physician offices or teaching someone in the practice to help coordinate the care for CSHCN in the practice and link them with public health and community resources. We also teach residents to practice with a care coordinator and to learn community resources and medical home concepts, so that they will set up medical homes in their own practices after residency. We have been asked to present this at a workshop at the Annual AMCHP Conference in March to share this as an example for other Title V programs.

Our 2010 Needs Assessment for MCHB is well underway. We are waiting for surveys from physicians and are about ready to send surveys to appropriate program staff from OCDD and DSS who refer families of CSHCN to other programs. Our goal is to find out the current referral patterns and what staff know about other programs and services. Our goal is to improve coordination of public health and community services. We are also working with Families Helping Families.

Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (LBDMN): As usual we have submitted a request for additional state funds for an epidemiologist for this program, so that the program can expand from coverage of 80% of births to 100%. We hope to expand this program to 100% of births over the next 2 years, if funds permit. This program recently submitted a grant to CDC for expansion of the registry. The grant is for approximately \$200,000 per year for 5 years. We should hear some time in January.

Hearing, Speech and Vision: This program is still waiting for administrative approval to spend the \$150,000 per year grant award which was supposed to start in 2009 and must be spent by March 2010. The grant is to improve tracking of infants who do not pass their newborn hearing screening tests to be sure they get a comprehensive audiology assessment and early intervention.

Budget: We just received significant restrictions in travel reimbursement, which may affect the good will of many of our physicians who do not get reimbursed directly for the clinics that they do for us, and who will have to pay for travel across the state with their own money. We hope this doesn't provide another barrier to accessing sub-specialty care for CSHCN in rural areas of the state.