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Children's Special Health Services: Budget Brings Changes

Parents of children with special health care needs and advocates noticed a \$794,000 reduction to Children's Special Health Services in "care coordination and clinical care" when the Executive Budget was presented to the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget last month. Children's Special Health Services (CSHS), in the Office of Public Health, provides sub-specialty medical care and family support services to children and youth who have special health care needs, and many of whom also have developmental disabilities. What will this reduction mean to the children and their families who depend on CSHS for their specialty health care?

According to J. T. Lane, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Public Health (OPH), no children will lose services. OPH is planning to transition some CSHS clinics to the private sector beginning July 1, 2013. In the OPH plan, children will continue to receive services, but from private providers, many of whom may be the same physicians that provided services in the CSHS clinics. If care coordination is not available at the private clinic, children will continue to receive care coordination from CSHS.

Currently OPH is working with Children's Hospital to potentially transition some children served in the Baton Rouge and Lafayette CSHS clinics to Children's Hospital multi-specialty clinics in Baton Rouge and Lafayette, using the same model that was successfully used in the Family Resource Center at Children's Hospital in New Orleans. Specific clinics slated for closure have not yet been confirmed; however, the CSHS pediatric neurology clinic in Baton Rouge will remain open.

In addition, OPH is looking at other areas of the state to determine where transitions to the private sector can be made. If a sufficient number of private sector physicians cannot be located to reach the budget reduction target of \$794,000, OPH will develop an alternate plan to make up the difference. Mr. Lane said, "We will not abandon these children" and added that his office would be happy to meet with any parents or families who have specific concerns. (Contact OPH at 225-342-6188)

CSHS will also continue to serve children who are eligible for CSHS and do not have private insurance or Medicaid.

The Council will continue to monitor this situation and report additional information as it becomes available.

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