

From: Ann Williamson [mailto:Ann.Williamson@dss.state.la.us]  
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Post-session summary of DSS budget, bills

Dear DSS Stakeholders:

I want to acknowledge and thank you for your committed efforts to advance social services for individuals, children and families during the 2007 Session of the Louisiana Legislature. It is truly because of such a valuable team of devoted partners that DSS is able to accomplish its mission to the degree it has.

Here is a wrap-up of the 2007 Session regarding Department of Social Services\* bills and budget matters for state Fiscal Year 2008 (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2007).

#### DSS BUDGET OVERVIEW

HB1, approved but not yet been signed by Gov. Blanco, will provide funds to support a \$1.2 billion DSS budget (state and federal funds). Service programs and administrative operations are funded at continuation level, including the addition of:

- \* Eleven more TO for child-care licensing.
- \* Additional funds for SES to avoid cuts and to provide for District Attorney contracts.
- \* Additional money for foster/adoptive parent board rates and for residential providers. This was funded at 50 percent of our request, so specifics of implementation will have to be worked out by the Office of Community Services.

It is also noteworthy to highlight that the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services appropriation will allow us to continue to serve consumers across all five orders of selection without a waiting list.

HB953, supplemental appropriations for FY2007, has been signed and includes \$8.3 million for OCS to recover from the federal Deficit Reduction Act; \$600,000 to pay for attorney bills resulting from OCS cases; and \$650,000 for emergency preparedness to cover orders of materials ready to be processed.

#### PROGRAMMATIC LEGISLATION:

The Legislature approved all four bills advanced on behalf of DSS, and all four have been signed by the Governor.

- \* SB91 (Sen. Nevers), now Act 122, primarily clarifies the rights of foster parents regarding information to which they are entitled and allows DSS to decide against co-location when two DSS offices are within 2 miles of each other.

- \* SB72 (Sen. Broome), now Act 119, amends the definition of \*caretaker\* in the Children\*s Code relative to registered Family Day Homes (FDHs) for child care, allowing DSS to notify parents of children of a valid abuse finding as was already allowed for public or private child-care centers. It also lets DSS sharing such findings with the Department of Education, which also registers FDHs.
- \* HB393 (Rep. Winston), now Act 95, provides legal representation for indigent parents in child abuse and neglect cases in CINC proceedings.
- \* SB102 (Sen. Jackson), now Act 166, transfers child-care licensing function within DSS to the Office of Family Support from the Office of the Secretary. Creating a dedicated child-care licensing unit will align the regulatory process with efforts under way to build a quality early childhood system in Louisiana.

Two other bills advanced with the full support of DSS are awaiting the Governor\*s signature:

- \* SB361 (Sen. Duplessis), the School Readiness Tax Credit, grants tax credits to individuals for child-care expenses for children age 5 and under as well as to child-care providers, child-care directors and staff and to businesses providing child care based on center rankings in the new Quality Rating System.
- \* HB669 (Rep. Curtis) amends the Interstate Compact on Placement of Children to comply with the Federal Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006.

Other legislation related to DSS included:

- \* SB136 (Sen. Jackson) increases the maximum contract DSS may procure without a Request for Proposal to \$249,999, up from \$149,999. The bill, awaiting the Governor\*s signature, will allow more contracting authority in recognition of increasing costs.
- \* HB178 (Rep. Doerge) defines a \*newborn\* as being not more than 30 days old; adds alcohol exposure to the definition of prenatal neglect; and provides for a report from doctors in certain instances. The bill is awaiting the Governor\*s signature.
- \* HB516 (Rep. Dorsey), now Act 154, designates the property on which the former A.Z. Young Building sat to be named A.Z. Young Park and orders appropriate markers.
- \* HCR165 (Rep. McVea) requests that a Louisiana State Law Institute committee study the extension of child support past the age of majority.
- \* HB120 and HB740 (Reps. McVea and Dorsey) sought, respectively, to prohibit sex-offender shelters unless local government approves and to prohibit such shelters from being within a six-mile radius of a child-care facility. Both bills were deferred. Instead, Study Resolution 128 (Sen. Broome) requests that DSS house paroled sex offenders at the

Gillis Long Center in Carville. And Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 126 (Sen. Broome) requests a study on the appropriate way to house sex offenders.

Both the budget and program legislation enacted during the session support DSS\* ability to continue its push for maximum service delivery and efficiency. We look forward to the new fiscal year and the opportunities it brings. Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,  
Ann Silverberg Williamson  
Secretary  
Louisiana Department of Social Services