

**Bobby Jindal**  
GOVERNOR



**Alan Levine**  
SECRETARY

**State of Louisiana**  
Department of Health and Hospitals  
Office of the Secretary

September 14, 2009

The Honorable Kay Katz, Chair  
House Health and Welfare Committee  
State Capital  
P.O. Box 44486  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Representative Katz:

In response to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 83 (SCR 83) of the 2008 Regular Session, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) submits the enclosed report regarding the efforts of the department and other state agencies to work with the BrightStart staff to implement the BrightStart strategic and implementation plans.

DHH is available to discuss the enclosed report and recommendations with you and the members of the House Health and Welfare Committee. Please contact Dr. Rony Francois, assistant secretary of the office of public health, at (225) 342-8093 with any questions or comments you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Levine".

Alan Levine  
Secretary

Enclosures

Bobby Jindal  
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**State of Louisiana**  
Department of Health and Hospitals  
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September 14, 2009

The Honorable Willie Mount, Chair  
Senate Health and Welfare Committee  
State Capital  
P.O. Box 94183  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Senator Mount:

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**LOUISIANA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM  
A HRSA-MCHB GRANT INITIATIVE**

**PROGRESS REPORT  
July 2009**

**Department of Health and Hospitals  
Office of Public Health  
Maternal and Child Health Program**

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## Executive Summary

The BrightStart initiative is a federally funded effort to design and implement a comprehensive early childhood system for children ages 0-5 years. BrightStart seeks to ensure that young children and their families have opportunities for optimal emotional, social, physical and cognitive development. The two primary goals of BrightStart are:

- 1) To maintain and strengthen service systems integration and partnerships to enhance children's ability to enter school healthy and ready to learn.
- 2) To continue to build an early childhood system that addresses the following priority areas:
  - Access to Health Insurance and Medical Homes
  - Mental Health and Social-Emotional Development
  - Early Care and Education
  - Parenting Education/Family Support

BrightStart is administered by the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health-Maternal and Child Health Program. In addition, the grant effort is conducted under the auspices and guidance of the Children's Cabinet and the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 83, passed in the 2008 Legislative Session, calls upon the state agencies that serve young children to participate in BrightStart.

A Needs Assessment of early childhood services in Louisiana was completed in 2004, followed by an extensive strategic planning process. With participation and input from over one hundred public and private stakeholders, a Strategic Plan was developed, which was approved by HRSA's Maternal Child Health Bureau and adopted by the Children's Cabinet in the summer of 2005. BrightStart is now in the implementation stage of the initiative. This work has been guided by the BrightStart Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from state agencies, a representative from the Louisiana House of Representatives and Senate, and representatives from nongovernmental child-serving organizations.

The following progress report highlights work that has been accomplished over the past six months by BrightStart, or collaboratively with other agencies, that will improve the lives of Louisiana's young children.

## **BrightStart Progress Report July 2009**

### **Grant Renewal:**

BrightStart was awarded a continuation of the State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Programs grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau for the period of June 1, 2009 through May 31, 2010. However, there has been a 25% reduction in the grant amount for all participating states.

### **Focus Area 1: Access to Health Insurance and Medical Homes:**

#### **Reduction in Preterm Births: Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 103**

BrightStart has provided policy makers with information about the need to reduce preterm births in Louisiana. As a result, SCR No. 103 was passed in the 2009 Legislative Session, which calls upon the Department of Health and Hospitals to develop a demonstration program to establish Medicaid coverage for women who have delivered a premature baby or who have chronic health issues, for a two-year period. The resolution also calls for an evaluation component of the program to assess the adequacy of the services and measure the anticipated cost savings, as well as a report to the Legislature on recommendations for Medicaid eligibility changes if the anticipated cost savings are realized.

Louisiana ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation in preterm births, and the average hospital cost for a preterm baby is approximately \$58,000, in comparison to \$4,300 for a healthier baby. Based on preliminary data, 15% of all Medicaid births in Louisiana are premature resulting in \$208 million in medical care for these babies in the first year of life. The strongest predictor of a future preterm birth is a prior preterm delivery or a preexisting chronic disease. In Louisiana, women who are not pregnant are not eligible for Medicaid if their income exceeds 12% of the federal poverty level, or \$2380 a year for a family of three—the second strictest eligibility requirement in the country. By contrast, the median Medicaid eligibility requirement for women in the United States is 41% of the federal poverty level. Through qualifying these high risk women for Medicaid, the demonstration program will seek to address their health care issues, assure access to appropriate family planning services and provide care management services and ongoing preconception counseling, thereby reducing the risk of a future preterm birth.

#### **Enrollment in LaCHIP and Medicaid for Children**

BrightStart continued to support the state's efforts to insure Louisiana's children. The Data Resource Center ranks Louisiana 2nd best among all states for the percentage of children ages 0-5 with health care coverage. It also ranks Louisiana 7th best for the percentage of all children with health care coverage. According to the Center, only 2.9% of children ages 0-5, and only 5.2% of all children, are not insured in Louisiana.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. *2007 National Survey of Children's Health*, Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health website. Retrieved [07/23/09] from [www.nschdata.org](http://www.nschdata.org).

During the 2009 State Fiscal Year, enrollment in Medicaid and LaCHIP increased by 28,953 children, or 4.46%. During that time the enrollment for the number of children ages 0-5 increased by 8,212, or 3.30%.

<b>Total Enrollment as of July 1, 2009</b>		
	<b>Medicaid</b>	<b>LaCHIP (including LaCHIP Affordable Plan and Prenatal Plan)</b>
<b>Children under age 19</b>	551,608	126,195
<b>Children ages 0-5</b>	234,077	22,843

## **Focus Area 2: Social-Emotional Development/Mental Health**

### **Early Childhood Supports and Services Program**

BrightStart has continued to collaborate with the Office of Mental Health to expand ECSS throughout the state. In the 2009 Legislative Session, funding for ECSS was increased by \$1 million for SFY 2010. Early Childhood Supports and Services (ECSS) is a prevention and intervention program that serves children from birth to 5 years of age who have been identified as at risk for developing social, emotional and/or developmental problems. Risk factors include abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence, parental mental illness, parental substance abuse, poverty, presence of developmental disabilities, and emerging social or emotional problems. The program provides supports and services to both the child and the family, and currently has nine sites covering 13 parishes, with funding in SFY 2009 at \$5.25 million through TANF-federal funds (85%) and state general funds (15%). Each ECSS site has an infant mental health team available to provide intensive prevention and treatment services. These teams are comprised of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and case managers who have received specialized training in infant mental health.

### **Child Care Mental Health Consultation Program**

BrightStart has continued to collaborate with the Department of Social Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education to maintain the only statewide Mental Health Consultation for Child Care programs in the country. In this program, a mental health consultant works with a child care center for six months, spending one day in the center every other week. Each six month consultation also includes 5 didactic sessions. Currently, 116 child care centers are being served, and a total of 265 centers have been served since the program's inception in August 2007.

## **Focus Area 3: Early Care and Education**

### **Quality Start – Louisiana's Quality Rating and Improvement System**

BrightStart has also continued to work closely with the Department of Social Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education to promote the implementation of Quality Start, Louisiana's voluntary quality rating and improvement system, which began in October 2007. The goal of Quality Start is to increase the quality of child care and early learning for all children, and to give parents and consumers the ability to understand, assess and demand higher quality. As of July 9, 2009, 627 centers (over 40% of all Class A licensed centers) were

participating in Quality Start with 473 centers achieving their first star and 154 centers achieving two or more stars (an increase from 75 centers as of January 1<sup>st</sup>).

### **School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC)**

BrightStart was a leader in the creation of the SRTC, a package of tax credits unique to Louisiana which are available to families, child care providers, child care teachers and directors, and businesses that support and/or participate in Quality Start. The credits became effective on January 1, 2008, and the first credits under the SRTC have now been distributed. A preliminary analysis showed that 1,247 teachers and directors and 73 centers were eligible for the credits, totaling approximately \$3.5 million in tax benefits.

### **Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Education Program (LA 4)**

In the 2008-09 school year, 15,739 children were served in the six hour instructional day of the LA 4 pre-k program, and 1885 children were served in the four hour enrichment program. The funding in that school year was \$83.5 million from the State General Fund. For the 2009-10 school year, it is anticipated that 15,892 children will be served in the six hour instructional day and 1742 children will be served in the enrichment program. Included in these numbers are two new school systems and three charter schools, leaving only five districts not participating in the program for the upcoming year. Though the amount of funding for the 2009-10 school year has been reduced to \$49.5 million from the state general fund, much of the difference will be made up by \$28.3 million from TANF funds. However, due to the reduced overall funding, the school system allocations will be reduced from \$5000 per student to approximately \$4600 per student, and no expansion within existing programs will be funded, including the expansion of eligibility that BrightStart supported, and was passed in the 2008 Legislative Session.

## **Focus Area 4: Parenting Education and Family Support**

### **Home Visitation Advisory Council-House Concurrent Resolution No. 226**

HCR No. 226 of the 2009 Legislative Session calls on BrightStart to establish a Home Visiting Advisory Council in preparation for potential new federal funding of home visiting programs. The resolution directs the Council to prepare a preliminary plan that may include an inventory of current home visiting programs in Louisiana, a categorization of their effectiveness, the identification of gaps in programs and the infrastructure, and the training and technical assistance needed to achieve and support a system of evidenced-based home visiting programs. The preliminary plan is to be provided to the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare before April 1, 2010. A number of bills have been introduced in Congress that could provide substantial funding to states for home visiting programs, and HCR 226 seeks to prepare Louisiana to respond to these future federal funding opportunities.

### **Nurse-Family Partnership Program**

BrightStart has continued to support the expansion of the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program (NFP), one of the most effective models of parenting education and family support. NFP serves first time mothers who are below 200% of the federal poverty level, beginning in pregnancy and continuing until the baby reaches two years of age. The program has been shown to reduce child abuse and neglect, emergency room visits for childhood injuries, subsequent pregnancies, and maternal and juvenile arrests, improve child learning measures, and

increase in workforce participation. In Louisiana, NFP serves 15% of eligible women. Although funding for program expansion was not approved in the 2009 Legislative Session, funding was sustained at the current level.

### **Louisiana Parenting Education Network (LAPEN)**

Through the work of BrightStart, a statewide association for parent educators has been formed to provide infrastructure and support for the profession. LAPEN has developed core competencies and a code of ethics for parent educators, and these were introduced at a summit held on March 3, 2009 with over 150 parent educators attending. Additionally, LAPEN organized a Parenting Education track for the Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana Conference which was held on March 4-5, 2009. LAPEN also coordinated three regional trainings in June for over 100 educators on evaluation of parenting education programs, with a national expert providing information and resources to assist local programs on evaluation and continuous quality improvement.

### **Other Work**

#### **Early Childhood System Integration Budget (ECSIB)**

Last year the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 774, creating the ECSIB. The legislation provided that this budget would be organized by the four components of BrightStart, including access to health care, social-emotional development and mental health, early care and education, family support and parenting education. A preliminary draft of the ECSIB has been completed and BrightStart and the Division of Administration provided testimony to the Senate Finance Committee summarizing the findings to date. BrightStart will continue to work with the Division of Administration to improve the accuracy of the information contained in the ECSIB.

#### **BrightStart Social Marketing Campaign**

Last year, the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families obtained funding from private foundations to develop a social marketing campaign around BrightStart and early childhood issues. In addition, a comprehensive social marketing campaign was developed by the Keating Magee firm. Currently, the campaign is being implemented with the creation of a new logo and web site for BrightStart. It is anticipated that the new web site will be launched by September 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **New Federal Opportunities**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) made funding available to improve coordination and collaboration among early childhood education and care programs and services. The Administration for Children and Families has announced the availability of \$100,000,000 of these funds to enable states to develop and implement a plan established by their State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care for children from birth to school entry. In the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Congress authorized the Governor of each State to designate or establish such a Council. BrightStart will work with partners in the governor's office to establish such a council in Louisiana. The funds in this ARRA supported initiative are to be used to support the work of the State Advisory Council, and specifically to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early



education and care designed to improve school readiness. The funds can be used over a three-year period, and applications may be submitted through August 30, 2010.

Additionally, in his Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Proposal, President Obama proposed significant funding for new and current early childhood programs. These proposals include: running *Title I early childhood grants* (a new funding stream) to provide 1:1 matching funds to school districts that use Title I funds to expand existing, or implement new, pre-K and early childhood education programs serving economically disadvantaged preschool students; an *Early Learning Challenge Fund* (a new initiative) to provide competitive grants to states for the development of a statewide infrastructure to improve quality and strengthen coordination among early learning programs for children birth through age 5; an *Evidence-Based Home Visitation Program* for low-income families (a new initiative), to provide matching grants with a priority for programs that have been rigorously evaluated to show their effectiveness, as well as additional funding for the development and evaluation of promising models; and an increase for *Early Reading First* which provides competitive grants for assistance to local efforts to enhance school readiness, especially for low-income children, through researched-based strategies and professional development. A number of bills reflecting the President's plan have now been introduced in Congress and are working their way through the federal legislative process.

Louisiana has made great progress in building an early childhood system and should be well positioned to apply for federal funds as they become available. However, in order for the gains that have been made to be sustained and strengthened, the Legislature, state agencies, private organizations, and public policy makers in Louisiana will have to continue to support these early childhood efforts in the face of difficult economic conditions. There is a convergence of evidence from economics, neuroscience and child development establishing the high economic return of investing in early childhood. It is hoped that Louisiana will continue to make public investments where they will yield the highest returns—by addressing health, education, social-emotional development, parenting education and family support on behalf of children ages 0-5.

The BrightStart initiative wishes to express its gratitude for the continued collaboration and participation of the state agencies that serve Louisiana's youngest children, as well as for the support of the Legislature and numerous private organizations statewide that continue to be involved in this early childhood systems building initiative. The progress and success of BrightStart and the realization of its critical goals and strategies will rely on the sustained support of these agencies, organizations and policy makers.