

**Bobby Jindal**  
GOVERNOR



**Alan Levine**  
SECRETARY

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

February 13, 2009

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

Dear Senator Mount:

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 in implementing the BrightStart strategic and implementation plans.

DHH is available to discuss the enclosed report and recommendations with you and the members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee. Please contact Dr. Gina Lagarde, Louisiana Child Health Medical Director in the DHH Office of Public Health, at (504) 219-4531 with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

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

Alan Levine  
Secretary

AL:blg

Enclosures

Bobby Jindal  
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Alan Levine  
SECRETARY

**State of Louisiana**  
Department of Health and Hospitals  
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February 13, 2009

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

Dear Representative Katz:

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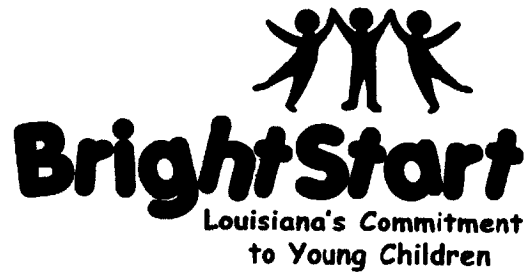
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Enclosures



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

**PROGRESS REPORT  
January 2009**

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

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Maternal and Child Health Program

## BrightStart Progress Report January 2009

The BrightStart initiative is a federally funded effort to design a comprehensive early childhood system for children ages 0-5 years, 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 develop service systems integration and partnerships to enhance children's ability to enter school healthy and ready to learn.
- 2) 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 (MCH). 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 adopted by the Children's Cabinet in summer 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 and nongovernmental child-serving organizations.

Through new policies and legislation, many of the goals and strategies set forth in the Strategic Plan have now been implemented. BrightStart has been a leader in a number of major accomplishments which will improve the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of Louisiana's young children. The following progress report outlines specific goals and strategies from the Strategic Plan that have been achieved in the past year of grant implementation:

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

1. Through aggressive, targeted outreach efforts, Medicaid/LaCHIP exceeded their goal of 24,000 new enrollees in the 2008 state fiscal year, enrolling 29,455 new children in that year. At the end of the state fiscal (June 2008), 646,430 children were enrolled in Medicaid/LaCHIP, and 248,672 of these children were under age 6.
2. Starting July 1, 2008, the new LaCHIP Affordable Plan enables families with incomes between 200 – 250 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to obtain health coverage with affordable monthly premiums and co-payments. January 2009 enrollment numbers

show that 1,795 children are currently enrolled in the LaCHIP Affordable Plan. It is expected that another 3000 children in this income range will enroll in this component of LaCHIP by June 30, 2009.

3. The Family Opportunity Act (FOA) is a Louisiana Medicaid “Buy-In” Program, implemented in October 2007, which allows families of children with disabilities whose income is up to 300% of the FPL to buy into Medicaid. January 2009 enrollment numbers show that 354 children are currently enrolled in FOA.
4. BrightStart supported the Louisiana Oral Health Program’s efforts to increase children’s access to quality oral health services.

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

5. BrightStart has coordinated cross-departmental trainings in Infant Mental Health with employees from the Office of Family Support, Office of Public Health, Children Special Health Services, Early Steps, and the Office of Community Services.
6. BrightStart collaborated with the Department of Social Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education to establish one of the only statewide Mental Health Consultation for Child Care programs in the country. The program now has 16 mental health consultants who have served 245 centers. A consultant works with a child care center for six months, spending a day in the center every other week. Each six month consultation also includes 5 didactic sessions.
7. In the fall of 2007, Quality Start approved the use of four social-emotional screening measures for use by child care providers: Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE); the Early Childhood Screening Assessment (ECSA); the Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA); and the Preschool Kindergarten Behavior Scale (PKBS).
8. Quality Start Mental Health Consultants are conducting regional trainings statewide at least twice a year for child care professionals in the practice of social-emotional screening. In addition, the consultants have a “Warm Line” for centers to call to request more specific assistance when using the social-emotional screening tools.
9. BrightStart supports the activities outlined in the LA Plan for Access to Mental Health Care, which is a comprehensive plan for the transformation of Louisiana’s mental health care system. Goal Three of the plan specifically addresses providing effective services for children, young adults and their families which are designed to meet their emotional, cognitive, developmental and physical needs, provided in environments to ensure success.

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

10. BrightStart has worked closely with the Department of Social Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education to promote the implementation of a voluntary quality rating system for Louisiana, now called Quality Start. Louisiana was the 15<sup>th</sup> state in the nation to adopt such a statewide system. 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. Approximately 600 centers (41% of all Class A licensed centers) have applied to participate in Quality Start with 495

achieving their first star, a figure far exceeding expectations given the experiences of other states. 97 of these have applied for higher stars, with 75 centers receiving higher ratings as of January 1, 2009.

11. The School Readiness Tax Credits for parents, centers, teachers and businesses who support and/or participate in Quality Start, became effective on 01/01/2008. A public engagement and awareness effort around the credits has begun with seed money from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Alternative Finance Technical Assistance Consortium.
12. Act 876 of the 2008 Legislative Session expands eligibility to the Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Education Program (commonly known as LA 4). The legislation incrementally increases eligibility from 185% of the federal poverty level in the current year to no income restriction in the 2013-2014 school year, when all four year olds who want pre-k, regardless of income, can be served. The legislation also encourages collaboration with community providers for the provision of LA 4 classrooms in non-school settings, including child care centers and Head Start programs, while maintaining LA 4's high quality standards.
13. House Concurrent Resolution No.168 of the 2008 Legislative Session urges the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the extent to which there is collaboration among the various early childhood education programs in Louisiana, including public pre-k, Head Start, and private child care, and to determine if such collaborative efforts are sufficient to provide the most effective and efficient delivery of services and to report the study findings and recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on Education prior to the 2009 Regular Session.
14. Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 7 of the 2008 Legislative Session requests the Department of Social Services to explore best practices in the field of family child day care homes and to study creating a licensing system and a quality rating system for family child day care homes and to report initial findings to the Senate and the House of Representatives Committees on Health and Welfare prior to March 1, 2009. Currently, family child day care homes are not licensed in Louisiana and are not eligible to participate in Quality Start.

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

15. BrightStart's Parenting Education/Family Support Workgroup formed a Parenting Education Task Force, which included representatives from the Office of Public Health, Tulane Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, the Children's Trust Fund, Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana, Cooperative Extension, the Parenting Center in New Orleans, the Louisiana Office of Community Services, the Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana, Healthy Start ABC's, Parents as Teachers, the Parent Information Resource Center, and others, which have accomplished the following to date:
  - Formed a Louisiana Parenting Education Network (or LAPEN) and defined its vision, mission, and goals.
  - Held a Summit on 02/27/2008 to launch LAPEN, which was attended by over 150 parenting educators. A Second Summit will be held on 3/4/09, and a Parenting Education Track has been organized for the Prevent Child Abuse LA Conference to be held March 4-6, 2009.

- Formed a Core Competencies Committee which is actively meeting to develop core competencies and a code of ethics for parenting educators in Louisiana.
  - Held regional trainings in Monroe and Baton Rouge with a renowned national speaker. Each training was attended by over 90 parenting educators.
16. Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 70 of the 2008 Legislative Session provides for the creation of the NFP Advisory Council to explore the expansion of the NFP program. BrightStart was a representative on the Advisory Council and participated in the development of the resulting report.

### Other

17. Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 83 of the 2008 Legislative Session links state agencies involved with young children and their families to BrightStart for implementation of BrightStart's Strategic/Implementation Plans and requires legislative reporting every 6 months.
18. Act 774 of the 2008 Legislative Session creates the Early Childhood System Integration Budget (ECSIB). The ECSIB shall be organized by the four components of BrightStart as opposed to by department. Therefore, the ECSIB will detail the state's allocation of resources for children ages 0-5 in the areas of: access to health care, social-emotional development and mental health, early care and education, family support and parenting education.
19. Louisiana was selected as one of only 14 states to participate in the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy at Harvard University, and BrightStart's efforts were recognized by the selection committee as a critical strength of Louisiana's application.
20. BrightStart, in partnership with the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, conducted a public opinion survey and developed a series of policy briefs, which addressed many BrightStart priorities. These were released in advance of the 2007 elections to inform candidates on the pressing issues that impact Louisiana's youngest children.
21. The Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families obtained funding from the Frost Foundation to develop a social marketing campaign around BrightStart and early childhood issues. A marketing summit was held and a comprehensive social marketing campaign was developed by the Keating Magee firm. Funding will be sought to implement pieces of the campaign over the upcoming year.

There is still much work remaining to be done as we move toward a comprehensive early childhood system in Louisiana. To this end, the following are some of the BrightStart priorities for the coming year.

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

- Support efforts to improve birth outcomes (e.g., reduce low birth weight, premature birth, and infant mortality) and reduce racial disparities in adverse pregnancy outcomes, by improving access to pre/inter-conception care. Increased eligibility for health coverage is recommended for the following high risk women: 1) Women who have had a previous

adverse pregnancy outcome, and 2) Women with a chronic health condition (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, hypothyroidism, seizure disorders).

- Support the Louisiana Oral Health Program's screening, sealants, and fluoridation efforts.

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

- Support increase in funding by \$2 million for the Early Childhood Supports and Services program in the Office of Mental Health to expand the program to achieve a statewide presence and complete the current seven half teams.
- Support the Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities' new effort to screen their Part C-Early Steps clients, ages 18-36 months, for autism.
- Support trainings in infant and early childhood mental health.

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

- Support collaboration between state pre-k, child care and Head Start by establishing a pilot effort in each region of the state which will fund an incentive payment to the collaborating school system of \$500 per child served in a LA 4 classroom in a child care setting.
- Support the professional development of early care and education providers (e.g., pre-k teachers and child care teachers).
- Lower the adult-child ratios and establish maximum group sizes in the child care licensing requirements.
- Support DSS' efforts to conduct a study of best practices for Family Child Day Care Homes as directed in SCR 7.

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

- Support the allocation of \$550,000 to create an operating budget for the Louisiana Parenting Education to ensure that it can successfully enhance the competency of the parenting education workforce and ensure the effectiveness of the parenting programs being used.
- Support the expansion of the Nurse Family Partnership program from serving 15% to serving 20% of all eligible women through the allocation of an additional \$4.95 million.
- Support Louisiana Child Death Review and MCH's Child Safety efforts to reduce childhood morbidity and mortality rates related to unintentional injuries by promoting injury prevention strategies.

### **Other**

- Assist the Division of Administration with the implementation of the Early Childhood System Integration Budget as described in Act 774.
- Implement the BrightStart social marketing campaign.