



RESILIENT LOUISIANA COMMISSION

CO-CHAIR DON PIERSON

CO-CHAIR TERRIE STERLING

Healthcare and Human Services Task Force

May 5, 2020

Meeting Commenced at 3 p.m.

Healthcare and Human Services Task Force Members Present

- Veneeth Iyengar (Co-Chair)
- Randy Morris (Co-Chair)
- Terrie Sterling (ex-officio)
- Todd Stevens
- Dr. Lester Wayne Johnson
- Scott Wester
- Warner Thomas
- Greg Feirn
- Steve Udvarhelyi
- Teddy Price
- Demetrious Porche
- Lisa Bruhl
- Terry Bonnette
- Clay Countryman
- Renee McCuller
- Edgardo Tenreriro
- Richard Vath
- Stuart Archer (Subject Matter Expert – Trustee -National Association of Behavioral Health)

- **Welcome and Call to Order**
 - The meeting was called to order by Veneeth Iyengar at 3:00 p.m. A roll call indicated that a quorum was present to conduct official business of the task force.

- **Task Force Discussion**
 - Mr. Iyengar led the discussion of the task force members to discuss the tasks presented on behalf of Governor John Bel Edwards.
The task force discussed the state's approach to testing, as well as business strategy for testing employees, patients and consumers as Louisiana transitions to the guidelines proposed in the MGMA guidelines. In addition, they continued to discuss the community's response to the coronavirus pandemic, addressing weak points in Louisiana's economy and developing a comprehensive game plan for Louisiana.
 - In response to the pandemic, Governor Edwards has called for the state to increase testing and to implement a contact tracing system to account for all positive cases and to reduce the spread of the novel coronavirus. The Governor has challenged the task force with addressing the needs of the state's workforce by addressing immediate and emergent concerns.
 - In regards to reopening, the task force is concerned about the guidelines, goals and capabilities for both testing and contract tracing, as well as the capacity for mental healthcare services within the state.

- **Contact Tracing**
 - Contact tracing tracks down anyone who might have been infected by a person who was recently diagnosed so those contacts can quarantine themselves and prevent further spread. The consensus amongst the task force is that there is a lack of guidance from the state on the contact tracing systems that will be put in place. Members previously discussed concerns about responsibility for providing contact tracers and data management and the state's capability to provide contact tracing.
 - Tracing systems should be complete and ready for action as soon as possible to prevent a resurgence of the virus. As socialization increases at the end of the Stay at Home Order, contact tracing will be essential in our efforts to prevent and track potential virus outbreaks.

- **Testing**
 - The task force has concluded that the state is not where we should be in regards to testing; in order to reopen safely, we must increase the bandwidth and capacity of our testing systems. The need for testing is anticipated to rise as people return to work in all sectors of the economy.
 - The task force noted the success of testing protocol in hospitals; as of now, all patients admitted are tested for the coronavirus. Businesses may have to introduce a modified protocol similar to this to best protect both employees and consumers.
The task force recommends researching the steps other states are taking to return to work in order to implement a set a best practices in order to have a standardized approach across the state.

- **Healthcare**
 - Unfortunately, people continue to believe that hospitals are overrun with coronavirus cases and they aren't seeking medical care for other reasons. The task force noted that patients view healthcare facilities as safe havens—it is essential to continue mitigation measures to prevent patients from contracting the virus while receiving care.

- **VI. Mental Health**
 - As we move forward, we will need a robust behavioral healthcare infrastructure to care for those affected by COVID-19. Louisiana's leaders should discuss the prioritization of mental and behavioral health in upcoming federal stimulus bills.
 - Access to quality mental healthcare was an issue before the coronavirus pandemic, and it is more essential now than ever. This provides the state the opportunity to lead the national conversation in addressing mental healthcare and crisis induced trauma. As it stands, there is room for improvement and innovation in Louisiana's state health plan.
 - It is imperative for the state to invest in a workforce development program to provide mental and behavioral healthcare for workers. Both the state and employers need to plan and prepare for an influx of healthcare workers, first responders and essential employees requiring care as the pandemic continues.

- **Emergency Concerns**
 - Healthcare facilities, businesses, families and government systems need to begin preparing for the advent of hurricane system and the potential damage it can bring to communities across the state.
 - Areas of concern include the evacuation of hospitals in the southern portion of Louisiana, sheltering of evacuees and a shortage of volunteers.
 - In addition to evacuating patients, hospitals must evacuate equipment, pharmaceuticals and ventilators. The issue lies in the transportation of materials and patients, as well as determining a shelter that would have the necessary space to implement physical distancing of patients.

As for municipalities, new evacuation protocol would need to be implemented. Residents that require transportation can no longer maximize the public transit system due to physical distancing efforts. The task force foresees a potential issue with locating shelter and supplies for communities that need to evacuate.
 - In addition to resource allocation, there is concern about the spread of the virus. A majority of COVID-19 cases are not in hospitals or facilities receiving care—they are isolating at home.
 - When these individuals evacuate and seek shelter, there is a risk of spreading the virus to those around them.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.