

Children's Special Health Services
Report to the DD Council
September 21, 2010

Children's Special Health Services: The MCH Block Grant review on August 18 at the HRSA office in Dallas, Texas went very well. The entire morning was spent discussing our Needs Assessment, and the entire afternoon was spent discussing the grant. We usually do not get a written report until November.

A lay-off was announced yesterday in OPH, affecting 13 facility manager positions. As of this writing, we are fighting for our social worker, who may be bumped through the civil service bumping process. Understandably, this has had a major effect on morale. In general, CSHS should be fairly resilient to the budget cuts, because our funding is mostly federal and at this point we have no supplemental state funds. However we are affected by lay-offs through the civil service bumping process, loss of positions when someone leaves, and difficulty getting contracts approved, even when they are 100% federally funded. All of this makes it difficult to reach grant deadlines and to spend all of our federal money.

Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network: LBDMN had a CDC site visit this week for its new 5 year \$1 million grant. CDC said the grant was very competitive. One reason we were selected to receive it is because we had continued to develop the registry using MCH Block grant funds even in the absence of additional federal funds specifically for birth defects. The program should be statewide by the end of FY 2011. To date the entire surveillance system has been maintained on an Excel Spreadsheet due to lack of funding for a web-based system and lack of adequate personnel in DHH IT. Through the new grant, CDC is providing a web-based software system that can be adapted to Louisiana and populated from the existing data set. The program will also be able to link with data sets from other programs such as Early Steps, CSHS, and HSV to provide better follow-up for children detected by the registry, leading to earlier treatment and intervention.

Hearing, Speech and Vision: Melinda Peat has been acting program manager since Lorraine Farr left at the end of June. To date, Civil Service has not approved her promotion and the program lost Melinda's old position during the hiring freeze. Paperwork has been resubmitted and we are hoping the promotion will be approved soon. The program has a new three year \$450,000 MCHB grant for improved tracking and follow-up of children diagnosed with hearing loss at birth. Intervention by six months of age is important to optimize future language and reading skills.