

**HOPE Advisory Council**  
**January 9, 2025**  
9:00 AM to 11:00 AM  
**State Capitol Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Press Room**  
900 North Third Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
**\*In-Person Only**

1. Call to Order at 9:07am.
2. Roll Call
  - Present:***  
Dr. Vanessa de la Cruz  
Lt. William Bosworth  
Dr. Allison Smith  
Etrena Gerard
  - Absent:***  
Michael Comeaux  
Sen. Regina Barrow  
Troy Prevot  
Judge Thomas Duplantier  
Shelley Edgerton  
Crystal Lewis  
Dr. Jason Picard  
Ronald Callegari
- A quorum was not reached, meeting and agenda items were not approved
3. Introduction/Welcome Members
  - a. Dr. Vanessa de la Cruz, OBH medical director first time sitting as a member.
4. Review and Approval of October 10, 2024 Agenda – Unable to vote due to lack of quorum.
5. Review and Approval of July 2024 Minutes – Unable to vote due to lack of quorum.
6. Presentations:
  - a. Rebecca Chiasson, Chemistry manager from the Louisiana (LSP) presented real de-identified cases from the LSP of polydrug use. Polydrug use is a term for the use of more than one drug or type of drug at the same time or one after another. Polydrug use can involve both illicit drugs and legal substances, such as alcohol and medications. In Louisiana, polydrug use is very prevalent. Blood evidence or blood alcohol content (BAC) collected during DWI investigations are excellent sources of evidence demonstrate polydrug use. BAC evidence is reviewed as the gold standard.

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For the LSP Crime Lab, all cases except fatalities, sexual assault, and cases for the Louisiana coroner, have BAC performed. If BAC is 0.08g% or greater analysis stops here. If it is less than 0.08g%, it goes on to toxicology.

In 2023, LSPCL released 1822 blood toxicology reports:

- 21% were negative or insufficient
- 9% had one drug reported
- 36% had 2-4 drugs reported
- 28% had 5-9 drugs reported
- 6% had 10+ drugs reported
- 70% of all blood cases had evidence of polydrug use without the alcohol data

Dr. Allison Smith inquired about peak times for LSPCL, to which Ms. Chiasson mentioned there is usually an increased use around holidays - New Years, Mardi Gras, as well as an uptick around the Fourth of July.

Some blood toxicology reports/cases presented included positive cases of Fentanyl. Fentanyl overdoses have reported to range from 3-28 ng/mL. The average drug consumer generally has no idea what they are actually putting into their bodies due to the counterfeit pharmaceutical epidemic. The DEA reports analyzing counterfeit tablets with fentanyl from 0.2 to 5.1 milligrams.

Over 70% of drugs are counterfeit in the LSPCL. With polydrug use and counterfeit pharmaceuticals being so rampant, it is important to monitor emergency rooms, encourage prevention, and substance use disorder recovery programs

- b. Lisa Freeman, Executive Director of Louisiana Highway Safety Commission (LHSC) presented on impaired driving, traffic fatalities and countermeasures. LHSC is funded by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). LHSC's highway safety plan seeks to coordinate and unite state and local programs and projects to reduce traffic crashes, deaths, and injuries by focusing on enforcement, public information, education, and legislation.

In 2023, the United States had 40,990 traffic fatalities. Furthermore, data supports that 78% of fatal crashes involve multiple factors. Most common fatal accidents involve alcohol and other drugs. The Fateful 4 are the following:

1. Alcohol impairment
2. Speeding
3. No seatbelt
4. Distracted driving

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In 2023, 811 fatal motor vehicle accidents in Louisiana were reported. About 30% of these were alcohol related (195 accidents) and included not wearing a seat belt, distracted driving or speeding.

Ms. Freeman highlighted a research study published in 2022, “Impacts of alcohol and opioid polysubstance use on road safety: Systematic review”. Evidence from this investigation substantiated an increase from 1% to 7% of opioids among fatally injured drivers from 1995 to 2016. Also, up to 30% of opioid-positive cases involved in a crash were also positive for alcohol.

DUI's in the United States began to rise again between 2021 and 2023. The cost of fatal motor vehicle accidents in Louisiana increased by 17.9% between 2019 and 2023, or the equivalent of 10.8 billion dollars. In the United States, the cost of fatal motor vehicle accidents is over \$200 billion. The state of Utah and others are lowering the blood alcohol legal level to 0.05 percentage of alcohol.

The Louisiana highway Safety Commission proposes:

1. Increase number of D.R.E's or drug recognition experts.
2. The use of oral fluid testing allowing to see “peak volumes” on the road before they come down when people arrive at the hospital or a place to get a blood test.
3. Implement drug and DUI specialty courts. Currently Louisiana has about 80 specialty courts.
4. Mandate SBIRT for all DUI offenders in Louisiana including first time offenders. Current laws only throw the entire force of the law as a felony to those with > 3 DUI's. In a recent study in LA, more than 50% of first time DUI's had an SBIRT suggestive of a SUD and had indicators suggestive of a comorbid mental health condition.
5. Expanding location and substance use and mental health conditions to law enforcement, judges, and prosecutors.

Act 662 in the 2024 legislative session amended status on impaired driving changing “under the influence” to “impaired” those allowing for inter court consistency. Presently, different courts define “influence” differently.

## 7. General Updates

### a. Office of Behavioral Health

- Marisa presented on Louisiana State Opioid Response Grant (LaSOR) 3.0, no cost extension ending in September. The Louisiana State Opioid Response (LaSOR) Program enhances existing statewide prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for individuals with or at risk for opioid use disorder (OUD).

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During this grant cycle, 2,941 individuals were served and 86,938 Narcan kits were distributed. Over 8,000 overdose reversals were activated from SOR funded Narcan kits. Lastly, 111,238 fentanyl testing strips were distributed and 8,978 individuals participated in EB prevention programs.

There was a question from the audience regarding Narcan Rx, decreasing dosage 0.4 intramuscular. While some advocated for decreasing the dosage, the standard 0.4 mg/1mL intramuscular dose is considered safe and effective for treating opioid overdoses. There is a risk of inadequate response, if less than the full 0.4 dose is administered.

- b. Community Impact Group – A new lead for the Community Impact Group is needed. Anyone interested in leading Community Impact Group, send inquiries to Dr. de la Cruz.
  - c. Healthcare Impact Group – Dr. Jose Calderon-Addo discussed topics from the Healthcare Impact Group including the following:
    - Addressing special populations, including perinatal SUD care.
    - Regulation of dosing Kratom and THC edibles
    - Increased BUP. Incentivizing pharmacies for MOUD and BUP stock and prescribing
    - January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting with Healthcare group
  - d. Public Safety Impact Group – Shelley Edgerton was not in attendance.
  - e. Other Updates
8. HOPE 2024 Year End Report Process Update – Received data from OPH and we are looking to meet with members and stakeholders to review and approve.
9. Public Comments
10. Discussion and Next Steps
- a. Impact Workgroups: HOPE@LA.GOV
  - b. Next Meeting: Thursday, April 10th 9:00 - 11:00 am  
Location: State Capitol Building, 4<sup>th</sup> floor Press Room
11. Adjourn – Motion to adjourn made by Dr. de la Cruz.