

**GOVERNOR BLANCO'S PRIORITIES FOR LOUISIANA'S
SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (SSBG) FUNDS**

Department of Health and Hospitals **\$101,701,534**
Behavioral Health Services **\$80,000,000**

Funds shall be used to restore and expand mental health services, substance abuse treatment and prevention services and developmental disability services as follows:

- **Crisis Response System** **(\$37,000,000)**
Inappropriate use of the public hospital emergency departments by individuals with mental health disorders has been of concern in Louisiana for many years. Since the hurricanes, this problem has been exacerbated due to the reduced numbers of acute and intermediate care psychiatric beds. The crisis response system will alleviate emergency room backlogs and decrease over-reliance on hospitalization by use of a range of specialized crisis services including mobile teams and crisis intervention units.

- **Substance Abuse Treatment and Prevention** **(\$8,000,000)**
It is expected that of the 500,000 residents in the areas that were impacted by Katrina and Rita, 25-30% of these individuals who have been exposed to severe trauma and 5-10% of those who have been exposed to moderate trauma will present with clinical symptomatology for abuse or dependence of alcohol and/or drugs. This has occurred within 6 – 9 months following other recorded disasters. The increased demand for services is in addition to an already overwhelmed service delivery system.

- **Behavioral Health Services for Children and Adolescents** **(\$18,000,000)**
There is a significant underutilization of mental health services by children and adolescents. Barriers to utilization include lack of adequate insurance coverage, lack of transportation because of poverty and/or distance, lack of behavioral health providers, and cultural stigma related to behavioral health problems. Early identification of problems and integration of services in the schools will provide the opportunity to prevent many of the societal problems associated with failing in school.

- **Preventing or Reducing Inappropriate Institutional Care** **(\$7,000,000)**
Louisiana's already poorly balanced system of care for individuals with developmental disabilities relied even more heavily on institutional care services immediately following the hurricanes. Efforts must be made to transition people from institutional settings where appropriate and to ensure that people already in community based settings can remain so wherever it is safe and financially appropriate. In areas outside of the metropolitan New Orleans area, there has been increased demand for case management and crisis intervention services to assure that community based placements can be maintained.

- **Behavioral Health Program Restoration and Resumption** **(\$10,000,000)**
In order to expand service delivery options there must be a restoration of existing programs and services that have been reduced or suspended in the aftermath of the hurricanes. Once core services are restored, recovery and expansion services and programs can be implemented.

Preventive and Primary Care

\$21,701,534

Funds shall be used to restore and develop comprehensive and integrated primary, preventive and behavioral health care services, with an emphasis on restoring safety net services for the uninsured and underinsured as follows:

- **Health Care Work Force**
Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill estimated that almost 6,000 active, patient-care physicians along the Gulf Coast were dislocated by the storm. Over two-thirds – 4,486—of those were in the three central New Orleans parishes that were evacuated, which constitutes the largest single displacement of doctors in U.S. history. The study also estimates that over 35% of the dislocated physicians in the three central New Orleans parishes are primary care physicians. The loss of medical manpower in hurricane-affected areas has created a critical shortage of physicians all across south Louisiana, especially in heavily affected areas, which has impacted our ability to provide critical primary, preventive and behavioral health services. Similar shortages are occurring with nurses and other licensed and trained health care providers.
- **Operational Tools**
In addition to restoring the health care workforce displaced by the hurricanes, there are certain operational tools needed to reduce high emergency room costs and improve health outcomes by focusing on providing quality, community-based, integrated outpatient primary care and behavioral health care services. Such operational tools include diagnostic and detection equipment, lab equipment, and other medical supplies or devices needed to provide evidence based quality preventive and primary care.