Department of Public Safety & Corrections

INSIDE OUT

Keeping Loved Ones Informed



A Message from the Secretary

As we once again approach the holiday season, I'm reminded of last fall, an incredibly difficult time for many people, but especially individuals in prison and their loved ones, who were unable to visit person. Although the in precautions Department's against COVID-19 undoubtedly saved lives, the decision to cancel visitation during this time was one of the most difficult I've

had to make during my career. The emotional cost of separation during the holidays for individuals in prison and their loved ones is not lost on me.

It is with sincere joy that I can say visitation resumed this holiday season, and many people are able to spend time with their imprisoned loved ones, possibly for the first time in many months. Positive contact with loved ones is one of the most important forms of healing during time in prison, and I'm excited that we resumed this year.

I wish you all a safe and cheerful holiday season, and I want to thank you on behalf of the entire Department for your continued support of your loved ones through difficult times.

Shall

Secretary James "Jimmy" Le Blanc



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Life Support

New Program at LCIW Prepares People for the Unexpected

The 2020 Families of the Incarcerated Advisory Board (FIAB) recommended that the Department of Public Safety & Corrections (DPS&C) explore partnerships with people who served long-term prison sentences. The Department partnered with Successful Imperfections to pilot a curriculum called Life Support at Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW). This program focuses on preparing imprisoned women with sentences of five years or more to return to their communities. The Life Support Pilot Program will provide instruction on social, professional, emotional, and life skills training for participants who are preparing for release. Structural components of the Life Support Pilot Program will include emotional health and regulation, soft skills/life skills enhancement, employment preparation, financial literacy, technological literacy, and relational skills. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this program is set to commence in early 2022.

Ivy Mathis, who serves on FIAB and will be teaching the class, spent 26 years in prison. She brings personal experience to the program, having been through reentry herself. "I couldn't really open up and ask, 'Excuse me, could you tell me what it's like out there?" she says. "I found out when I came home that there were so many things I didn't know."

She describes the many emotions someone might feel upon release, including uncertainty, intimidation, and anxiety. She says these emotions could hit at surprising times, even crossing the street or checking out at the grocery store. She's excited "to be able to go back and teach them that what they are going to feel is all normal."

"Emotionally and mentally, you need to be ready," Mathis says. She continues, "For the first two days, I didn't sleep because I was in a whole new environment. I'd known prison for 26 years. All the noise that got on my nerves, and it's quiet in this house. That made me scared. I wished somebody was there to make noise."

Because she has gone through it, Mathis can help prepare others who will be releasing soon. "From this side, I know what questions they're going to ask, and I put it all on paper. Not only my experience but some of the men and women who've called me." Her goal is "to get them prepared on what they're going to be feeling, how to deal with it, and how to be successful."

"It's just an honor to be able to go back in the prison and give them a light of hope," Mathis concludes.



Light Where Darkness Lives

Angola Braille Class Finds Enthusiastic Student Body Eager to Learn

A new Braille class at Louisiana State Penitentiary increases post-prison employment opportunities and allows participants to provide a much-needed service for visually impaired children. Twenty preapproved students attended their first Braille class at Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP) in mid-February. The two-year, 19-lesson course is part of a national prison Braille program that teaches incarcerated individuals to create Braille books for blind and visually impaired children.

Blind children must have access to the same material sighted children use in the classroom, but the high cost of Braille books hinders many impaired children from receiving what they need. Class instructor Robin King says a math textbook in Braille could cost as much as \$20,000. "There have been years when kids were unable to get a textbook," she said. "They were either too expensive or had yet to be created."



King is also the director of Louisiana Aim, an instruction material center for the visually impaired in Baton Rouge, LA. Purchasing books through other prison Braille programs has been the most affordable solution for King, who envisions individuals at LSP someday creating Braille books to be sold to other states and school systems.

Learning Braille gives individuals in prison a chance to change their lives. "I just want these guys to be the best they can be, at whatever rate or speed they can go," King said. "It is a work-at-your-own-pace program." The course requires participants to successfully transcribe a novel and create 35 pages of Braille, which is then submitted to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., for grading. The grade is either a pass or fail, but participants who do not succeed on their first try may resubmit.

The students' first certification will be literary Braille, followed by languages, math, and music. After students receive their certification, the American Printing Press will start providing books to be transcribed into Braille. In addition to helping impaired children, certified individuals can make a decent living after their release. "Transcribers in Texas that finish the program can earn an average of \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year transcribing independently," King says.



Student Laurence McKee, an academic tutor and music student, sees the Braille class as a way to serve others and give back. "I plan on transcribing books for the blind, maybe get involved in the music transcription as well."

Participant Melvin Davis says, "I would like to take the education home with me and apply it where it is most needed in society."

This story was adapted from an article originally published in *The Angolite*.

Lead Out Louisiana

Individuals in Prison Transform Stories Into Song

On Tuesday, November 9, 2021, imprisoned individuals at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center (EHCC) gathered in the chapel for a viewing party of ten videos created by Lead Out Louisiana. The videos featured songs written and performed by seventeen individuals in prison, with the help of Lead Out Louisiana.

Lead Out Louisiana is a project created by Mary McBride and Charlie deGravelles, who both have a passion for using music to make a difference in the lives of others. The creation of these songs provided a powerful experience of self-expression and healing.

Over the course of several months in the spring of 2021, individuals at EHCC wrote their own lyrics and worked with Lead Out Louisiana's writers and band to put them to music. The final product was a series of videos portraying the songwriting process, interviews with the participants and band members, and music videos of the completed songs.

Each song was unique in style and content and reflected the individuals' experiences, hopes, and emotional journeys. Some participants had musical experience, but others didn't. In one video, Steve Stewart, who participated in the project, says, "Working with the band was really an awesome experience."

"The whole process was a brand new experience for me," says participant Robert Ledet. "It was a challenge, but also a fun challenge."





At the viewing party, Department of Public Safety & Corrections (DPS&C) Secretary James "Jimmy" Le Blanc and EHCC Warden Kirt Guerin both praised the program, pointing out the moving nature of the videos. "It is absolutely wonderful." Secretary Le Blanc says in one of the videos. "Music is healing. I mean, it is. Honestly, I got healed a little myself watching the program, you know. Look, I had a tear running out of my eye on some of that."

Warden Guerin agrees, "They were liberated to be able to help someone with their story." He continues, "It gave me chills to watch it. I've been working in prison thirty years, but seeing these guys be transparent and then transform their story into song, it was amazing."

DPS&C is now working with Lead Out Louisiana to provide a similar program at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women.

Probation & Parole Myth Busting

The Division of Probation and Parole (P&P) functions as a community services division of the Department of Public Safety & Corrections (DPS&C) and is comprised of District Offices located throughout the state and a headquarters office in Baton Rouge. P&P supervises adults in DPS&C custody who are released to the community on probation, parole, diminution of sentence, home incarceration, medical furlough, or supervised released. They ensure people on community supervision abide by the conditions of supervision, identify problems and solutions, make appropriate referrals, provide general counseling, and perform arrests as needed to protect public safety. The Division is actively involved in the Department's efforts to reduce recidivism through a variety of programs such as administrative sanctions and Day Reporting Centers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated several questions surrounding operations for many organizations and Departments. DPS&C wants to dispel any misinformation that could potentially hinder the successful reentry of individuals recently released from prison.

MYTH: The Probation and Parole district offices are not open due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

FACT: The Probation and Parole district offices remain open and operational. Recently released individuals and their family members are encouraged to contact their District Office with any concerns. You can find contact information for all district offices here on the DPS&C website.

Learn More

MYTH: Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, recently released individuals do not need to report to their District Office.

FACT: Within 48 hours of release, individuals MUST report in person to the local District Office listed on the front of their Release Certificate.

MYTH: Probation and Parole is not currently offering referrals for services to help with mental health, trauma, substance abuse, or other issues.

FACT: Probation and Parole continues to refer individuals to the appropriate community partners to help make reentry as successful as possible.

Visitation Reopening



The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPS&C) resumed visitation across state-run prisons. Maintaining in-person connections with loved ones is critical to a person's success in prison. The Department continues to monitor the current status of COVID-19 in the public and in its prisons.

Prisons have educated their populations on the processes and procedures of visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. At all institutions, visitors must be on the incarcerated individual's approved visitation list in order to be eligible to visit.

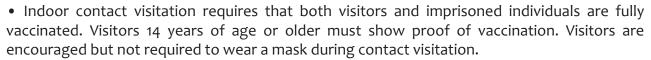
State prison facilities may begin phasing in general reopening plans, which include a limited number of volunteers for faith-based programming, as well as ramping up vocational and educational programs to near pre-COVID-19 levels. In addition, plans are being worked out to resume face-to-face attorney visits. Currently, individuals in prison visit with their attorneys via Zoom call and by telephone. All reopening plans will follow COVID-19 guidelines and are subject to change as guidelines or COVID-19 prevalence at the facility or in the community change.

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COVID-19 Update Continued from Page 5

Visitation procedures include the following safety measures:

- General Visitation Space shall accommodate the required 6 feet for social distancing.
- Upon entrance to the prison, all visitors will be screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, which includes having their temperature checked.
- All visitation areas and transport vehicles shall be sanitized prior to and between visits.
- Hand sanitizer shall be available in all visitation areas.





- Non-contact visits are required if the imprisoned individual or visitor is unvaccinated; non-contact visits require plexiglass separation barriers between the visitor and the imprisoned individual, and food is not allowed. Imprisoned individuals and visitors must wear masks until seated for the commencement of the non-contact visitation. Masks may be removed for the seated portion of the visitation only.
- Visitors are not required to provide COVID-19 vaccination status documentation to participate in outdoor visitation (contact or non-contact).
- Visitation hours, days, and duration and the number of allowed visitors vary by institution.

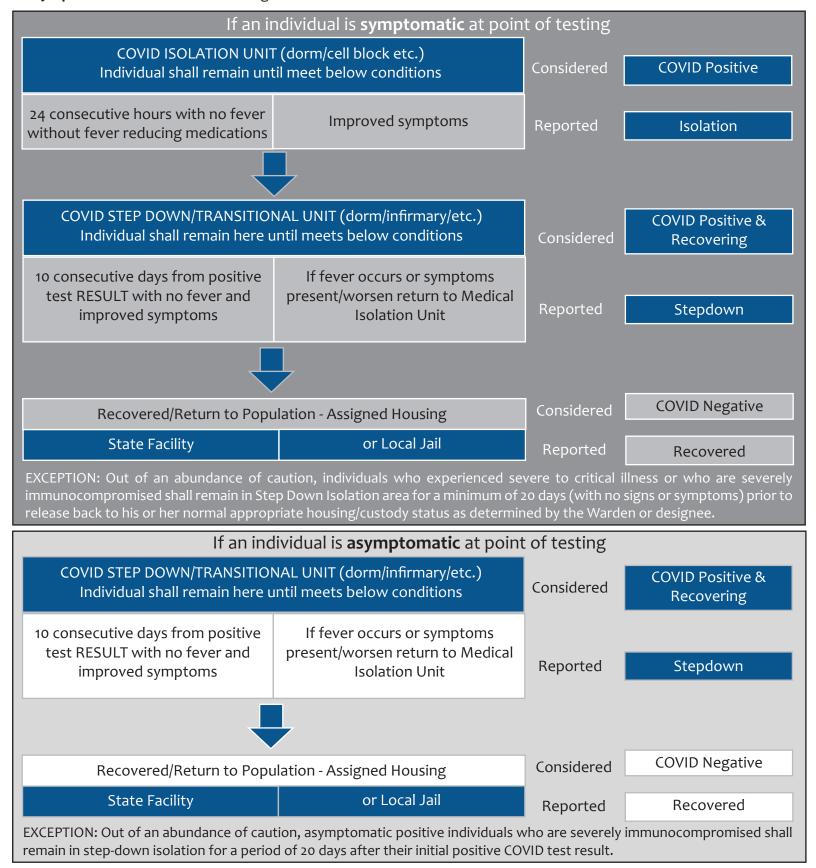
DPS&C continues to test proactively for COVID-19. If someone within a dorm tests positive or is exposed to positive cases, that dorm or unit will be placed in quarantine, and visitation for that group will be postponed until they've been cleared by medical. If at any point the total active cases at a prison exceeds .5 percent of the total population of that institution, visitation at that prison will be suspended immediately until the rate falls below .5 percent.

Institution	Visitation Times	Contact Number	Hours of Operation
Allen Correctional Center	Saturday & Sunday, 7:30 a.m3:30 p.m.	(337) 389-6029	Monday-Friday, 9-11:30 a.m. & 1-3:30 p.m.
David Wade Correctional Center	Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m4 p.m.	(318) 927-0400	Monday-Friday, 8:30-11 a.m. & 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Dixon Correctional Institute	7 days a week, 8 a.m4:45 p.m.	(225) 634-6291	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m4 p.m.
Elayn Hunt Correctional Center	7 days a week, 7:30 a.m4 p.m.	(225) 319-4559 or (225) 319-4364	Monday-Friday, 7 a.m5 p.m.
Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women	Hunt & Jetson: Saturday & Sunday, 8 a.m4 p.m., at Louisiana State Penitentiary: Friday-Sunday (orderlies), 8 a.m4 p.m.	(225) 319-2324	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m4 p.m.
Louisiana State Penitentiary	Saturday & Sunday, 8 a.m4 p.m.	(225) 655-2343	Monday-Friday, 9 a.m3 p.m.
Rayburn Correctional Center	Tuesday & Wednesday (max. custody), Thursday-Sunday (medium & minimum custody), 8 a.m3 p.m.	(985) 661-6380	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m4 p.m.
Raymond Laborde Correctional Center	Saturday & Sunday (general population), 3rd Thursday of the month (segregated housing), 8:30 a.m3:30 p.m.	(318) 876-2891 ext. 268	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m4:30 p.m.

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COVID-19 Positive Procedures

When a person in prison is identified as positive for COVID-19, the following procedures and timelines are followed in all state prison facilities. The procedure followed depends on whether the individual is **symptomatic** or **asymptomatic** at the time of testing.



What's New in the Department of Public Safety & Corrections?

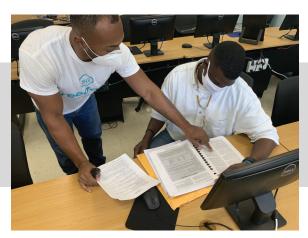
The following are short descriptions of recent changes to Department regulations that may directly affect your loved ones.

Programs and Services – Educational and Workforce Programs – Tutors, Mentors, and Facilitators - Department Regulation No. PS-D-4

Individuals housed at Louisiana state facilities who meet the appropriate requirements have the opportunity to become tutors, mentors, or program facilitators. This provides individuals in prison with an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others while in prison. Additionally, they may be paid and receive Certified Treatment and Rehabilitation Program (CTRP) credits, which may contribute to an earlier release date.

Many facilities already offered similar leadership opportunities. This policy creates a formalized process that is implemented Department-wide. Many tutors, mentors, and facilitators find a sense of accomplishment, meaning, purpose in the work they do. A formalized process allows more individuals in prison to take advantage of these opportunities and positively impact others.





A student is taught in Elayn Hunt Correctional Center's NCCER Construction Management Academy. Instructor Rontrell Wise (Certified in Project Supervision) assists student Robert Knox in coursework required to complete Project Supervision.

Inmate Advisory Council to the Secretary - Department Regulation No. PS-A-2

In August 2021, Secretary James "Jimmy" Le Blanc established the Inmate Advisory Council to the Secretary (IACS) to further a culture of collaboration among individuals in prison, facility staff, and DPS&C Headquarters and facilitate meaningful communication with the prison populations. While individual facilities already utilized Offender Welfare Councils, which allow people in prison to inform wardens of concerns and issues regarding individual prisons, the IACS will relay Department-wide issues and concerns of the prison population directly to Secretary Le Blanc.

The IACS will give people in prison the opportunity to share opinions on broad issues that affect the population as a whole, such as department policies, reentry programming, or staying connected with family while in prison. While not all recommendations may be appropriate or possible to enact, the Secretary wants to hear about issues directly from those affected. "The prison population knows better than anyone what it's like in the prisons. We want to be responsive to what they have to say," says Secretary Le Blanc.

Noteworthy Accomplishments of People in Prison



Elrick Gallow

Elrick Gallow has come a long way since he arrived at Raymond Laborde Correctional Center over 20 years ago. His mindset was that his situation was everyone's fault but his own. Eventually, he realized he needed to take responsibility for his actions, so he summoned his courage, looked hard at his choices, and made the decision to walk out of prison as a different person than the one who walked in. This led him to develop a relationship with God.

He studied a number of religions but settled on Islam. It made the most sense to him and appealed to him the most. He has since become the Resident Imam and is a positive, respected leader in his community. He enrolled in Ashland University, where he achieved an associate degree in general studies. He is currently working toward getting a bachelor's degree in communication. Gallow completed several self-help programs such as Living in Balance, Malachi Dads, Anger Management, and AA/NA.

Today, Gallow surrounds himself with people who live in accordance with the positive changes he's made in his life. He is a trustee and holds the prestigious job of Administration Building Orderly. He gives back by mentoring others. He says, "The seeds were always there for me to become the man I am today. I don't like prison, but the harsh reality is that prison saved my life."

Luther McFarland

Luther McFarland, the Reentry Court Program welding instructor at Louisiana State Penitentiary, bolstered his trade credentials in May when he became the first incarcerated individual in the country to pass the National Welding Educators exam through the American Welding Society. This certification permits McFarland to teach the National Center for Construction and Education Research (NCCER) curriculum anywhere in the country. He is now among the more than 200 certified welding instructors in Louisiana who can administer the NCCER tests.

McFarland sacrificed his recreational time and much sleep to study for the exam. His routine began at 3 a.m. with study. He then trained the Reentry Court Program students from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. After school, he showered, ate, and



continued his studies until 10 or 11 p.m. His faith in Jesus Christ gave him the desire to press on, he says, and he pledges to use his education to honor God. McFarland's advice to others who are working toward vocational excellence is to keep striving because he is an example of how perseverance can pay off.

McFarland says passing the National Welding Educator exam boosted his confidence and encouraged him to achieve other goals, such as writing a book and being released from prison.

Frequently Asked Questions

Each issue of *Inside* Out will include answers to 2-3 frequently asked questions that affect the prison population and their friends and family members.

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Q: What are the different ways individuals release from prison?

1. Full Term Release

The individual completes the full term of their sentence. If someone is sentenced to serve a fixed number of years in prison, they are released at the end of their full term. They are not on parole and do not have to follow any parole conditions. However, depending on the nature of their conviction (i.e. violent offense, sex crime, drug offense, etc.), they may have restrictions on certain civil rights, including restrictions against buying or owning a weapon, holding specific jobs, securing parental rights, and traveling abroad.

2. Parole Eligibility

The individual is eligible to be considered for reentry into society and will complete the remainder of their sentence under the supervision of DPS&C's Office of Probation & Parole. Parole may be granted through a parole hearing conducted by the Board of Pardons and Parole. Most often, parole eligibility is determined at the time of sentencing and is generally the earliest possible date a person can be released.

Parole release is at the sole discretion of the Committee on Parole panel considering each individual case. If they are deemed suitable, they are released from prison and remain under the supervision of DPS&C for the remainder of their sentence. Many individuals have several parole hearings before they are found suitable for parole release. Individuals can be denied parole for up to two years at a time. If denied, it is their legal right to request another parole hearing.

3. Release via Diminution of Sentence (AKA "Good Time")

La.R.S. 571.3 authorizes certain people in prison to earn credits towards the reduction of their time prison for good behavior. This is known as "good time." In addition to good time, eligible persons may earn up to an additional 360 days towards the reduction of their time in prison by completing Certified Treatment Rehabilitation Programs. (CTRP). The law specifies which type of offenses are eligible to earn ordinary good time and the rate at which it is awarded as well as who is eligible to earn additional credits for the completion of CTRP. Once an eligible person reaches his or her good time release date, which is calculated based on the total length of the sentence, he or she is released onto Good Time Parole Supervision to complete the remainder of the sentence.

4. Commutation of Sentence

The individual receives a reduction in their sentence based on a favorable recommendation by the Pardon Board and the approval of the Governor. A person whose sentence is reduced or modified can become eligible for parole. Once the Governor approves the Pardon Board's recommendation for commutation, and the individual meets all other eligibility requirements, they are scheduled for a parole hearing. Anyone in prison has the legal right to apply for commutation of sentence through the Pardon Board. This process has multiple steps. The individual must first submit an application to the Pardon Board requesting a Commutation of Sentence hearing. The application includes the individual's disciplinary record; work history; certificates of completion for vocational, educational or rehabilitative programs, letters of support, and a personal statement. The Pardon Board reviews the application and, if it determines that the application has merit, a hearing is scheduled and an extensive clemency investigation is conducted. (Please note: This terminology can be confusing because the individual is not actually being considered for a pardon, but for commutation of sentence.) As a result of the hearing, if the Pardon Board

FAQ Continued on Page 11

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recommends a commutation, the recommendation is sent to the Governor for review. There is no time limit to the Governor signing the recommendation; it could be signed within the Governor's term, it could be held over to the next Governor, or it may be denied. If the Governor signs the commutation, the individual then follows the conditions of the new sentence, which may include, but is not limited to, parole eligibility and/or applicable good time calculation.

5. New Legislation

The individual may become eligible for parole or a reduction of sentence based on new federal or state laws. New legislation can result in certain populations becoming eligible for reentry to mainstream society.

For more information, see the LA Informational Handbook for Friends and Families of People in Prison.

Q: How can I communicate with my loved one while they are in prison?

The Department of Public Safety & Corrections (DPS&C) encourages positive communication between individuals in prison and loved ones. DPS&C offers several avenues of communication for individuals assigned to state correctional facilities, including regular U.S. mail, secure telephones, and secure electronic communication.



1. U.S. Mail

Upon intake into a state facility, individuals are provided information in writing about the Department's rules for handling mail to people in prison, utilizing the "Notification of Mail Handling" form. People in prison are not allowed to receive packages, publications, greeting cards, or post cards from their families. People in prison may only receive packages through Union Supply Direct, who is the approved package vendor for the Department.

However, family and friends are allowed to send correspondence (letters), which must be addressed to the facility to which the imprisoned person is housed and must include the person's name and DPS&C number on the envelope. Do not send cash or stamps through the mail or hardback photographs. These particular items will be rejected, and cash will be confiscated.

2. Telephone Communication

Department regulations allow for each individual in prison to have an approved master list of up to twenty telephone numbers for family, friends, and legal calls. This list can be updated quarterly. Personal calls may be monitored and/or recorded for security purposes. Legal calls, however, are not.

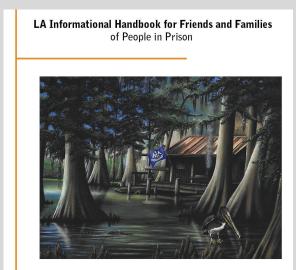
People in prison can only make collect calls, and their telephones are limited to out-going calls only, usually limited to fifteen minutes. When a person in prison makes a call, the called party is notified that it is a collect call from a state prison facility. The called party is given the option of accepting or refusing the call. Telephone communication access is provided by an outside vendor, Securus Technologies. Securus' Customer Service number is 1-800-844-6591 for individuals needing assistance with billing issues, problems receiving calls from prisoners, receiving unwanted calls, and/or requesting a block on future calls.

The Department allows people in prison to call approved cell phone numbers under specific guidelines. The called party must set up an account with Securus and provide their primary residence information. Calls to prepaid cell phones are not allowed. The person in prison must have your cell phone number on their approved phone list. Individuals housed in local level facilities must utilize the phone systems that are set up in those facilities. Information on how to use the system can be obtained by the individual from the staff at the assigned facility.

3. Electronic Communication

The Department offers electronic communication for staying in touch as well. JPay provides email service that is usually faster than regular mail, and photographs (in good taste) can be attached to the emails. This service is all done through a secure connection, so people in prison never actually have access to the internet. Visit http://www.jpay.com/ for more information.

Helpful Resources



The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, with the help of many organizations, creates handbooks to offer advice on navigating the difficulties associated with having a friend or family member who is incarcerated. You can find them on the DPS&C website.

Learn More

You can follow the Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections on YouTube to see helpful information regarding the imprisonment of a loved one, updates from Secretary Le Blanc, success stories of formerly incarcerated individuals, and much more!

Watch Now



Emergency Resources

If you or a loved one has been impacted by the recent weather events, you can find a helpful list of emergency resources, which includes information on FEMA Federal Disaster Assistance, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief Network, SNAP and DSNAP, HUD Disaster Assistance, HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and much more on the DPS&C website.

Learn More

The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections Social Media



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@LaDeptofCorrections



Louisiana Department of Corrections

Follow us for important updates!

To find more resources that could be beneficial to previously incarcerated individuals or friends and family members of currently incarcerated individuals, you can visit:

doc.la.gov

lareentryguide.com

reentryprograms.com/in/louisiana

reentryessentials.org