

Louisiana Department of Corrections

# INSIDE OUT

Keeping Loved Ones Informed



## A Message from the Secretary

Spring is here and we're starting the year off right! Construction has begun at our new LCIW site, which I recently toured. The \$149 million-dollar project will feature new medical and mental health services like post-partum programming. Meanwhile, our ladies at the current LCIW facility reached a milestone during their graduation ceremony in January. Some earned their high school equivalency diploma while others walked away with trade certificates. Regardless of their fields, it was a hopeful day for all.



Our male population also made strides at the latest Prelease class graduation. The program prepared them for the real world with knowledge and life skills. Now, they are ready to enter society as agents of change, who live by character, integrity and attitude. A similar vibe was present at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center during the "Justice: A Partnership in Progress Event" on January 25, 2023. Local leaders and guest speakers sparked inspiration and gave resources for life after prison.

Finally, we want to give a shout out to the LSU Lady Tigers! The squad took time out of their schedule to visit the Louisiana State Penitentiary on January 25, 2023. We applaud them for playing alongside our inmates and embracing our population. Congratulations to coach Mulkey on the team's national championship. Go Tigers!

Secretary James "Jimmy" Le Blanc

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## The ETH Program Helps Former Inmates

The first day of release can be daunting. Where will I work? Where will I sleep? These questions led to the creation of The Emergency and Transitional Housing Program. It provides emergency and / or transitional housing to stabilize the reentry process until long-term housing can be found. Emergency housing includes shelters which provide sleeping accommodations for up to 12 hours and serve at least one meal per day. Anyone who is newly released or under Probation & Parole supervision can spend up to 14 days there within a six month period.

Transitional housing is not an extended shelter stay; but a temporary residence until someone can find a long-term housing solution. The facilities provide at least one meal per day and counseling services are optional, but not fully covered. Participants under Probation & Parole supervision may stay up to six months or the end of their supervision, while those who have just left incarceration may stay no longer than three months.



## Pay for Success Joins the Fight Against Addiction

78% percent of Louisiana inmates struggle with substance use disorders. After release, many can't find work, rehab services or a place to live. This harsh reality led the DOC to start the Pay for Success Initiative. The program directs newly released people to recovery houses, which are safe, family-like environments for those battling addiction. Upon arrival, residents forge bonds with other peers who share their same issues.

Recovery houses also offer professional help for houseguests. Peer support specialists help residents plan their recovery. Other staff help residents with life skills, such as employment support and budgeting. Offsite recovery services and education assistance are also offered by Keep it Real Ministries, while the CADA Prevention and Recovery Center offers counseling and mental health services.





## The Ladies of LCIW Cross the Stage

Young people without a high school degree often land in prison. Now, The Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women is giving them another shot. 81 Inmates earned diplomas on December 6, 2022. Their concentrations ranged from high school equivalency degrees (HiSET) or trades like cosmetology, furniture restoration and welding. Sarah Ritter, a 2022 HiSet and IC3 grad, walked across the stage that day. "I just felt like I was brand new. I just felt so proud of myself," said Sarah. Her academic career ended in the eleventh grade, but she's building a new legacy for her children. "With the family I came from, you didn't see that, you didn't see them achieving those things."



**81 Inmates Earned Diplomas**



**Sarah Ritter**

Like Sarah, Gabrielle Cooper's high school journey flamed out early. "My education level was at about tenth grade before I became incarcerated," said Gabrielle. "Now, I have achieved my associate's degree, so I knew I always had it in me." Prison education may have changed Gabrielle's life, but critics feel inmates shouldn't be rewarded for crimes. 2022 cosmetology grad, Danena Williams, thinks otherwise. "A lot of people think we don't deserve these opportunities because we're offenders," said Danena. "I say equality is for all. Everybody deserves a second chance."



**Gabrielle Cooper**



**Danena Williams**

## The Lady Tigers Team Up with LSP

Coach Kim Mulkey and the LSU Women's Basketball Team visited Louisiana State Penitentiary on January 25, 2023. They spoke with inmates and learned about the programs offered to incarcerated people to prepare them for release. Players say it was an eye opening experience, and helped them see the human side of prisoners. During the visit, players competed with inmates in free throw and three point shooting contests. The Lady Tigers were also introduced to a Louisiana State Penitentiary inmate program called Prisoners Assisting Warriors Service, where inmates give back by training service dogs for adoption by U.S. Military veterans suffering from PTSD.



## LCIW Gets a Visit from Our Legislature

The Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus met for a tour and group discussion at Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women on January 17, 2023. The group discussed gender specific needs of the female population. It was a pleasure having such an impactful group of women stop by for a visit.





## The Seventh Prelease Class Graduates

The East Baton Rouge Parish Regional Reentry Center held a ceremony for the 7th graduating Prerelease class in January 2023. During the ceremony, inmates received a certificate of completion of their graduation and shared some of the knowledge/skills learned from the curriculum. The graduates received some words of wisdom from Warden Grimes, Director Cochran and Kirt Guerin. Guerin left the inmates with, "Be the change you want to be. We are all CIA agents of change. C-Character, I-Integrity, and A-for attitude." Each speaker shared wise words of wisdom for the inmates to utilize once they are released from incarceration.



## EHCC Helps Inmates Plan for Reentry

The offender clubs - Lifers, Civic Leadership, and the Alumni Association of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center hosted a program entitled Justice: A Partnership in Progress on January 25, 2023. This program invited community leaders, law enforcement, and several guest speakers to talk with the inmate population on successful Reentry. As such, they provided valuable information and resources on obtaining housing and employment after their release. This provided inmates with hope and also aspirations of making better choices. Some of the guest speakers included: Vladimir Celius of Total Community Action - New Orleans, LA., and Patrick Young, Director of Gun Violence and author of Sharp Men NOLA.



## Construction Begins on the New LCIW Site

Secretary Jimmy Le Blanc, LCIW Warden Kristen Thomas and other DOC leadership toured the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women construction site on March 15, 2023. The 938-bed facility is being built on the west side of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center. The Governor, Secretary Le Blanc and other dignitaries broke ground on September 1, 2022. The facility will feature an efficient and modern layout and includes spaces strategically designed to enhance the Department's focus on providing rehabilitative, educational, medical and mental health, and post-partum programming. The \$149-million dollar facility replaces the old LCIW destroyed during the 2016 flooding. Completion is expected in early 2025.



## The Inmate Advisory Council to the Secretary Makes Recommendations

The Inmate Advisory Council to the Secretary is a newly-created opportunity for representatives of the incarcerated population to meet directly with the Secretary and propose their ideas for changes that they believe should be implemented statewide. Each prison in the state has two incarcerated representatives on the Council. This year, based upon the issues that were most important to the members, the Council split into 4 areas of focus: Adaptive/Inclusive Physical Activities, Mentor Incentives/Programming Evaluations, Legislative Proposals, and Visitation/Family Bonding Opportunities. Each group had multiple separate meetings led by a Chairman, also a person in prison, to discuss the issues that were important to them, gather data and research, and develop potential solutions to present to Secretary LeBlanc.

On January 17th, 2023, the full Council met in person at Louisiana State Penitentiary to present their proposals and discuss them with Secretary LeBlanc, Chief of Operations Seth Smith, Executive Counsel Natalie LaBorde, and other staff. The workgroups proposed several great ideas for the Secretary LeBlanc's consideration, including: more access to activities to bring the older and younger populations together, such as card game tournaments, bingo events, cornhole competitions, wheelchair activities, and other games that require varying levels of mobility; legislative proposals relating to parole eligibility, diminution of sentence, CTRP credits, and sentencing; expanded incentives for mentors, including more visitation days, access to Zoom for important family events, work opportunities for incarcerated women outside of the prison grounds, changes in computer access policies, and more; and modification of visitation areas and policy to allow for increased access to virtual visitation and create a more family-centered environment.



## Helpful Resources

### LA Informational Handbook for Friends and Families of People in Prison



The Louisiana Department of 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 in prison. You can find them on the DOC website.

[Learn More](#)

You can follow the Louisiana Department of 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 DOC website.

[Learn More](#)

### The Louisiana Department of 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](http://doc.la.gov)

[lareentryguide.com](http://lareentryguide.com)

[reentryprograms.com/in/louisiana](http://reentryprograms.com/in/louisiana)

[reentryessentials.org](http://reentryessentials.org)