

PRE-LITIGATION MEMORANDUM

TO: Andrea Armstrong, Professor of law
FROM: Arthur Chassaignac, Law Student Class of 2023
DATE: November 29, 2022
RE: “Better Know a Jail” Memo; Incarceration Law – Fall 2022

This memorandum provides an overview and general pre-litigation information pertaining solely to the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff’s Prison. Specifically, this memorandum details how the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff’s Prison operates, details the facility, and concentrates on the issues of transparency and oversight. Though there exists a pre-litigation memorandum on www.incarcerationtransparency.org that provides a broad overview of both the Calcasieu Parish Correctional Center and the Sheriff’s Prison, this memorandum will focus solely on the Sheriff’s Prison.

About the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff’s Prison – Location, Budget, Demographics, Statistics

The Calcasieu Parish Sheriff’s prison is located at 5300 E. Broad St. in Lake Charles, LA 70615. The Calcasieu Sheriff’s Prison is located on a plot of land encompassing approximately 100,000 square feet, of which it shares with the Calcasieu Parish Correctional Center. Online research indicates that the inmate capacity of this facility is approximately 683. The facility includes both a men’s prison and a women’s annex, and thus holds both sexes as a part of its facility. The Correctional Center and Sheriff’s Prison, being located at the same location, are essentially considered as part and parcel of the same facility and have overlap when it comes to leadership and supervision. It is located on the outskirts of Lake Charles, in a semi-urban, semi-rural area of the city.

The Calcasieu Parish Sheriff’s Website currently lists the corrections facility’s inmate roster as housing 743 inmates, though it does not specify which exact prison each individual is located in. The prison roster statistics are as follows: 343 white inmates; 371 black inmates; 102 female inmates; 641 male inmates.

The facility has minimum, medium, and maximum security units, though it is unclear as to the exact population capacity of each unit. Each unit consists of common areas, showers, and fountains. Each cell either has two or three bunks, and are equipped with various amenities such as desks and toiletries.

Online research and previously created pre-litigation memorandums for the Calcasieu Parish Prison System indicates that Calcasieu parish Police Jury is responsible for the Correctional Services Budget. The proposed budget for the 2023 fiscal year, as described on the

[Calcasieu government website](#), is \$427 million, an \$8.1 million increase from the 2022 budget of \$395 million. Of this amount, a total of \$154 million is categorized as disaster recovery and major grants. It is unclear from the government website as to how much exactly from this amount goes towards the Corrections Center, though previous litigation memorandums state that the Center was allocated over \$3.6 million for 2021, a budget which they overspent by almost \$3 million that year.

There exists very little public information pertaining to deaths in custody. Though previous attempts at public records requests have been unsuccessful, prior research has indicated that the latest death at this facility occurred in 2017 from an inmate committing suicide. Additionally, there exists very little information as to any complaints that inmates have of the facility, any lawsuits that are currently in litigation, and/or any prevalent issues that plague the system and require the attention of the public eye.

Leadership

Listed in the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office website, both Daniel Burkhalter, Jr. and Jeffery Miller are listed as Calcasieu Sheriff's Correctional Center Commanders.

Daniel Burkhalter, Jr. had previously worked as a Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office as a burglary and theft detective. He's been employed by the CPSO since 1991, and is described as having ten years of corrections experience. He is a graduate of the Calcasieu Parish Regional Law Enforcement Academy and earned a degree in Criminal Justice from McNeese State University. His listed contact information is as follows: Phone – (337) 481-3801 ; Email - dburkhalter@cpsol.com

Jeffery Miller is described as having joined the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office in 1995 as a correction officer. He has been employed in corrections for his entire career, and he has had several promotions throughout his career. In 2001 Miller was promoted to a Shift Supervisor, in 2004 he was promoted to the position of Assistant Warden, and in 2015 he was promoted to Warden over the Correctional Center in October 2015. Miller is also a graduate of the FBI National Academy, being listed as attending Session 252.

Prison Inmate Programs

Due to the difficulty that exists in finding detailed descriptions of the Sheriff's prison, it is important to discuss what the Sheriff's Office details in their description of their facility and what they provide for those that are serving time behind bars. The Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's website also described the numerous inmate programs which are undertaken by the Corrections Department of the Sheriff's Office. These programs include the following: health Services Unit; Offender Education; Prison Ministry; Work Release; Records Department; Safety Department; Human Resources Department; Prison Transportation; and the Women's Correctional Services.

All of these services or departments are common place among prisons across the county, and are described in depth on the Sheriff's website.

Notably, the Offender Education and Prison Ministry sections are described as being for and in the aims of improving the lives of the inmates at the facilities. The Offender Education description is as follows:

This department is responsible for providing quality educational services responsive to the academic, vocational, and social needs of the offender population so as to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities to function as meaningful participants in the community.

The Prison Ministry section, depicting itself in a similar fashion, is as follows:

This department is responsible for ensuring that incarcerated offenders have reasonable opportunities to pursue lawful individual religious beliefs and practices of the religion or faith of their choice. Religious programming is provided consistent with security practices and principles, rehabilitative goals, health and safety, allocation of limited resources, responsibilities, and needs of the correctional facilities. The department also provides counseling and direction to employees of the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office and to offenders incarcerated within the correctional facilities.

Though these depictions paint a rosy picture of the prison and its facilities and programs, the Sheriff's Office provides no information to show the public exactly what this means. There are no facility depictions, budgets, staff, or inmate participation information included to show the value or practicality of these departments. This leaves no other recourse other than interviewing actual inmates to ascertain the actual level of funding or accessibility these services are provided.

Transparency and Conclusion

The Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Prison, and the entire Corrections Office as a whole, has a long way to go if it wishes to be seen as a transparent and trustworthy corrections facility and organization. Throughout my research, I not only had significant difficulty in finding information on the prison and its facilities, but whenever I called the Sheriff's Office to obtain information, I was transferred to different individuals who did not answer my calls.

There is little information on the web or otherwise concerning public information, accreditation or other specifics on the facilities budget or operations. Likewise, upon making a public records request for a different assignment, I was met with the same issues of either silence or stonewalling.

These searches for information are made exceedingly difficult due to the Sheriff's prison association with the Calcasieu Correctional Center and the Correctional Department as a whole. Both the Sheriff's Prison and the Correctional Center, as far as I can tell, are essentially treated as part and parcel of the same facility, with differences lying in the types of inmates they house

there, being pre-filing of charges or post-filing. While the Sheriff's Department website does provide valuable information as to who is in charge of overseeing the facilities and where they are located and what programs they sponsor, it provides very little information outside of surface level details that simply satisfy ordinary curiosity.

Though the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury's website provides information as to their meetings and the minutes therein, there exist little other information which can be easily accessed by the public which provides information of the sort which this memorandum seeks to address. For example, upon a public records request inquiring as to the deaths of inmates at the facility, said request was met with a response essentially stating that the facility no longer keeps these kinds of records.

Therefore, from surface-level government websites, non-responsive phone communications, and the lack of records as to the deaths in custody of inmates at the facility, there is much to be wanted from the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Prison. Though it is highly helpful that the Sheriff's website keeps an up-to-date roster of the inmate population at the Corrections Centers, it could be highly improved by including which specific facility each inmate is located at, the portion of the jail in which they are located, whether they have been charged or sentenced for an offense, and for what exact crime and statute they are charged or sentenced for.

Overall, while it is understandably difficult in keeping a continuous up-to-date information database detailing the Sheriff's Prison facility and the goings on therein, there exists little to no effort to keep the public aware of the facility and to provide transparency. Though there is no well-known publicly available information pertaining to negative aspects, this is overshadowed by the lack of detailed information whatsoever which points either way. In order to maintain integrity and public trust in the correctional system as to the Sheriff's Prison, it is clear that there is much more which needs to be done.