

MEMORANDUM

TO: Professor Navalance and Professor Kumar
FROM: Sara Dramis
DATE: December 29, 2024
RE: Facility Memo
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Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women

Introduction

The Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW), is located at 7205 Highway 74, St. Gabriel, Louisiana 70776 in Iberville Parish.¹ However, due to a flooding that occurred in August of 2016 which rendered the facility buildings uninhabitable, operations are temporarily being held at what is formerly known as the Jetson Center for Youth located at 15200 Old Scenic Highway, Baker, Louisiana 70714 in East Baton Rouge Parish.² LCIW was originally built in an attempt to decentralize Angola³ and incarcerated women were transferred from Angola to LCIW in 1961.⁴

Deaths Since 2014 and Trends

Thanks to the information that has already been posted on the Incarceration Transparency website, a lot of the past death data is readily available. The website states that there were 2 deaths in 2015; 3 deaths in 2016; 6 deaths in 2017; 2 deaths in 2018; and 2 deaths in 2019.⁵ Most of these deaths were either related to cancer or heart disease.⁶ In response to my own Public Records Request, the DOC stated that there had been 10 deaths from January 2020 to present day. However, the death log data I was sent only contained information regarding 9 of the deaths. The log stated that there were 4 deaths in 2020; 1 death in 2021; 2 deaths in 2022; and 2 deaths in 2023. The log states that the deceased women were between 47 years old and 79 years old and 3 women were Black or African American and 6 women were White. An autopsy was only required for the two women who had unexpected deaths. Notably, two of the deaths were COVID-19 related. At one point during COVID-19, LCIW had the most confirmed cases of coronavirus of any state correctional facility in Louisiana.⁷

¹ https://www.doa.la.gov/media/covlszgx/08a_corrections_services.pdf

² <https://lailluminator.com/2022/09/01/louisiana-breaks-ground-on-new-womens-prison/>

³ <https://www.angolamuseum.org/history-of-angola>

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https://www.fordfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/persistorexhibitionbrochure_ford_022420_finalspreads.pdf

⁵ <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/scholarly-articles/independent-reports/>

⁶ *Id.*

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<https://thelensnola.org/2020/04/24/covid-19-death-reported-at-louisiana-correctional-institute-for-women/>

Jail Characteristics

The original LCIW facility contained multiple buildings and the original facility had a bed count of about 600 incarcerated women.⁸ However, as previously mentioned, the original facility flooded in August of 2016.⁹ Some of the buildings had eight inches of water while others had up to three feet of water.¹⁰ The only building that did not flood was the chapel building.¹¹ Even after two weeks, the buildings remained flooded and were uninhabitable.¹² At this time, the facility was severely overpopulated and housed 985 incarcerated women all of which needed to be evacuated and transferred to other facilities. This was the first time in Louisiana history that an entire state prison had to be evacuated.¹³ The incarcerated women were primarily transferred to the Jetson Center for Youth and Elayn Hunt Correctional Center while a lesser number of incarcerated women were transferred to Angola and other facilities across Louisiana.¹⁴ Notably, the Jetson Center for Youth was previously shut down and only reopened to house incarcerated women who had to be evacuated from LCIW.¹⁵ Unfortunately, these women were sent to facilities that already had issues with overcrowding and the transfer of the LCIW women to these facilities only furthered that issue.¹⁶

Work on the new facility was to begin in late 2020 and then was projected to begin in early 2021.¹⁷ However, due to COVID-19 creating material shortages and worker shortages¹⁸ neither of these goals were met and work did not begin on the facility until September 1, 2022.¹⁹ The new facility will have 938 beds, making it quite larger than the original facility.²⁰ The project will cost \$146 million dollars and is partially being funded by the Federal Emergency

⁸ https://www.doa.la.gov/media/covlszgx/08a_corrections_services.pdf

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<https://www.postsouth.com/story/news/local/2022/09/02/new-correctional-institute-for-women-breaks-ground-in-st-gabriel/65471062007/>

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹²

<https://www.wafb.com/story/32835290/mold-growing-inside-womens-prison-where-floodwaters-refuse-to-recede/>

¹³

<https://www.postsouth.com/story/news/local/2022/09/02/new-correctional-institute-for-women-breaks-ground-in-st-gabriel/65471062007/>

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ <https://lailluminator.com/2022/09/01/louisiana-breaks-ground-on-new-womens-prison/>

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ <https://theappeal.org/louisiana-women-new-prison/>

¹⁸ <https://lailluminator.com/2022/09/01/louisiana-breaks-ground-on-new-womens-prison/>

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<https://www.postsouth.com/story/news/local/2022/09/02/new-correctional-institute-for-women-breaks-ground-in-st-gabriel/65471062007/>

²⁰

<https://www.wwltv.com/article/news/new-womens-prison-being-built-in-louisiana-to-replace-flooded-out-one/289-4a36a1fb-ccd8-4dc3-8884-c8bb19288a4a>

Management Agency (FEMA).²¹ The completion date was originally at the end of this year (2024), but as the end of this year approaches, the builders now anticipate the facility will be completed around mid to end of 2025.²²

Once built, the new facility will have an education building that will offer incarcerated women courses in reading, writing, and mathematics.²³ The facility will also have a vocational training building that will offer classes in culinary arts, horticulture, upholstery, and welding.²⁴

Notably, the facility offers incarcerated women several programs. In 2018, Operation Restoration partnered with Tulane School of Professional Advancement to offer classes to incarcerated women so that they could obtain their BA in Social Sciences.²⁵

LCIW's warden, Kristen Thomas, who assumed command on December 6, 2021 is the third female warden in DOC history.²⁶ Thomas previously served as the Chief of Security at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center and prior to that, she served as the mental health director at Angola.²⁷ With temporary operations being conducted in East Baton Rouge Parish, the sheriff is Sheriff Sid J. Gautreaux III.²⁸ Sheriff Gautreaux was first elected Sheriff in 2007.²⁹ He was also elected the President of the Louisiana Sheriff's Association in 2016.³⁰ Prior to becoming Sheriff, he was the Chief of the Baker Police Department from 1980 to 2007.³¹

The facility's annual budget is roughly \$26 million dollars.³²

Evidence of Oversight

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<https://www.wwltv.com/article/news/new-womens-prison-being-built-in-louisiana-to-replace-flooded-out-one/289-4a36a1fb-ccd8-4dc3-8884-c8bb19288a4a>

²²

<https://www.postsouth.com/story/news/local/2022/09/02/new-correctional-institute-for-women-breaks-ground-in-st-gabriel/65471062007/#:~:text=Officials%20expect%20completion%20of%20the,withstand%20a%20500%2Dyear%20flood.>

²³ <https://doc.louisiana.gov/location/louisiana-correctional-institute-for-women/>

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵

<https://sopa.tulane.edu/degrees-programs/programs-study/humanities-social-sciences/college-prison-program>

²⁶

https://www.ktbs.com/news/female-warden-to-head-flooded-womens-prison-as-doc-seeks-to-increase-diversity-among-leaders/article_429cff24-576c-11ec-a77c-9318fe2d498b.html

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸

<https://www.ebrso.org/SHERIFF#:~:text=Gautreaux%2C%20who%20began%20his%20law,resigning%20to%20run%20for%20Sheriff.>

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² https://www.doa.la.gov/media/covlszgx/08a_corrections_services.pdf

LCIW has maintained American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation since 1993.³³ In 1997, LCIW was released from the federal consent decree.³⁴ In September of 2015, there was an on-site Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Audit conducted.³⁵ The findings stated that the audit team was “very impressed” with LCIW staff and found the facility to be very “clean and unique.”³⁶ LCIW was found to be in compliance with 42 standards and while 1 standard was not met, after a corrective action period, LCIW was found to be in full compliance with all PREA Standards.³⁷ There is also a television special titled “900 Women” which was released in 2001 and follows three inmates at LCIW.³⁸

Evidence of Transparency

While LCIW does not have its own website, it does have a page on the Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections website.³⁹ Using a drop down on this page, an individual may search for an incarcerated person via the “Locate Imprisoned Person” feature.⁴⁰ On this website, there is also a “Public/Media/Legal Information” drop down in which I was able to access information pertaining to how to make a Public Records Request. The website states that the request can be submitted in writing to the listed address or by email at docpublicrecords@la.gov. I ended up sending my Public Records Request to the provided email and after some emails back and forth, Ms. Kelly Liebert at kelly.liebert@la.gov, and the Deputy General Counsel, Ms. Erin St. Pierre at erin.stpierre@la.gov, were able to provide me with the records. I thought the records were provided in a timely manner and the women were pleasant to work with.

Due to the 2016 flood and complications with the construction of the new facility, most of the news coverage regarding LCIW is about such issues.

Notable Cases

While there have not been any notable cases on jail conditions within the past five years, there are some notable incarcerated women in LCIW history. One notable incarcerated woman at the facility was Gloria Williams, also known as Mama Glo.⁴¹ She is Louisiana’s longest-serving incarcerated woman. Mama Glo spent 50 years incarcerated as she was initially charged at 16 years old and was not released until she was 76 years old.⁴² Another notable incarcerated woman at the facility is Antoinette Frank who is a former New Orleans Police Department officer.⁴³

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ <https://doc.louisiana.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/LCIW-PREA-Audit-Report-2016.pdf>

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0274311/>

³⁹ <https://doc.louisiana.gov/location/louisiana-correctional-institute-for-women/>

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ <https://therealnews.com/mama-glo-louisianas-longest-held-female-prisoner-finally-walks-free>

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³

<https://deathpenaltyworldwide.org/antoinette-frank-facing-execution-while-the-crimes-mastermind-serves-life/>

Frank was convicted in 1995 and is the only woman on Louisiana's death row.⁴⁴ Frank's bid for clemency was denied in October of 2023.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Id.*;

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/oct/13/antoinette-frank-new-orleans-police-officer-death-row-clemency-denied>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/oct/13/antoinette-frank-new-orleans-police-officer-death-row-clemency-denied>