

**TO:** Professors Nishi Kumar and Erica Navalance  
**FROM:** Dara Gallion  
**RE:** “Better Know a Jail” Memo  
**DATE:** December 29, 2024

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## **Natchitoches Parish Detention Center**

### **Introduction**

The Natchitoches Parish Detention Center is located at 299 Edwina Drive, Natchitoches, LA, 71457 in Natchitoches Parish.<sup>1</sup> Natchitoches Parish is one of sixty-four parishes in Louisiana. According to data from the 2020 Census, Natchitoches encompasses roughly “1,253 square miles of land area” and has a population of 37,515.<sup>2</sup>

### **Jail Oversight and Leadership**

The Natchitoches Parish Detention Center has historically been overseen by the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff’s Office.<sup>3</sup> Currently, Sheriff Stuart Wright serves as the sheriff of the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff’s Office<sup>4</sup> and Major Roger Henson serves as the warden of the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center.<sup>5</sup> Sheriff Wright announced his candidacy for Natchitoches Parish Sheriff in 2019<sup>6</sup>, took office in June 2020<sup>7</sup>, and began his second term as sheriff in July 2024.<sup>8</sup> As Sheriff, Stuart Wright oversees the facility as a whole. While Roger Henson oversees the day-to-day operations of the facility as warden.

Recently, there has been a change in the management and operation of the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center as Sheriff Wright announced “that Natchitoches Parish Sheriff’s Office has entered a partnership with LaSalle Corrections to manage and operate the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center. LaSalle Corrections is a nationally accredited corrections management corporation that operates 18 facilities and employees over 1,800 corrections professionals,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://npsheriff.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://data.census.gov/profile/Natchitoches\\_Parish,\\_Louisiana?g=050XX00US22069](https://data.census.gov/profile/Natchitoches_Parish,_Louisiana?g=050XX00US22069)

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.ksla.com/2024/09/18/lasalle-corrections-manage-operate-natchitoches-parish-detention-center/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://npsheriff.org/Sheriff>

<sup>5</sup>

<https://www.ktalnews.com/news/crime/natchitoches-escapee-seankalyn-chatman-captured-by-u-s-marshals-near-opelousas/>

<sup>6</sup>

<https://www.kalb.com/content/news/Deputy-Sheriff-Stuart-Wright-announces-candidacy-for-Natchitoches-Parish-Sheriff-507356081.html>

<sup>7</sup>

[https://www.ktbs.com/news/meet-the-sheriff--stuart-wright-natchitoches-parish/article\\_10855250-0394-11ed-aa79-8fd2dfca87d6.html](https://www.ktbs.com/news/meet-the-sheriff--stuart-wright-natchitoches-parish/article_10855250-0394-11ed-aa79-8fd2dfca87d6.html)

<sup>8</sup>

<https://natchitochesparishjournal.com/2024/06/24/stuart-wright-sworn-into-second-term-as-natchitoches-parish-sheriff/>

providing custody services for both pre-trial detainees and sentenced offenders.”<sup>9</sup> This five-year partnership was set to go into effect on November 1, 2024, and will allegedly allow for improvements to be made to the medical staff, security, and technology.<sup>10</sup> It is possible that this change in management was prompted by some of the recent controversies the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center has faced recently, which are discussed below. According to a 2019 annual inspection of the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center conducted by ICE, the facility was not accredited by The American Correctional Association, The National Commission on Correctional Health Care, The Joint Commission, or Prison Rape Elimination Act.<sup>11</sup> It is unclear if the change in management will lead the facility seeking accreditation from these organizations.

### **Jail Characteristics**

Construction was completed at the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center on June 18, 1996<sup>12</sup> and an additional cell block was added in 2000.<sup>13</sup> The Natchitoches Parish Detention Center houses both male and female inmates, pre- and post-trial. Additionally, the facility offers the HiSET Educational Program which awards inmates GEDs or associates degrees for completion of required courses.<sup>14</sup> While there is little information available on the exact square footage of the facility, the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center is estimated to have a maximum capacity of over 500 inmates.<sup>15</sup> The Natchitoches Parish Sheriff’s Office website has an online inmate roster which shows that currently there are approximately 119 inmates being housed at the facility.<sup>16</sup> All of the current inmates are male, with 31 inmates identifying as White, 87 inmates identifying as Black, and one inmate who has chosen not to disclose their race.<sup>17</sup> In a recent interview, Sheriff Wright stated that “only about one-third of the detention center” is currently being used and this underutilization began nearly ten years ago.<sup>18</sup>

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<https://www.ksla.com/2024/09/18/lasalle-corrections-manage-operate-natchitoches-parish-detention-center/>

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.ice.gov/doclib/facilityInspections/natchitochesDcLA\\_CL\\_07-03-2019.pdf](https://www.ice.gov/doclib/facilityInspections/natchitochesDcLA_CL_07-03-2019.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://app.la.la.gov/PublicReports.nsf/0/B94C5ACB2E1C531E862570C90077EBC3/\\$FILE/0000110A.pdf](https://app.la.la.gov/PublicReports.nsf/0/B94C5ACB2E1C531E862570C90077EBC3/$FILE/0000110A.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.ice.gov/doclib/facilityInspections/natchitochesDcLA\\_CL\\_07-03-2019.pdf](https://www.ice.gov/doclib/facilityInspections/natchitochesDcLA_CL_07-03-2019.pdf)

<sup>14</sup>

<https://natchitochesparishjournal.com/2022/05/25/npdc-education-programs-awards-four-ged-and-one-associate-degree-to-current-jail-inmates/#:~:text=NPDC%20Education%20Coordinator%20Deputy%20Monia,Congratulations%20to%20the%20graduates!!>

<sup>15</sup> <https://louisianaprisoneroster.org/louisiana/county-jail/natchitoches-parish-detention-center/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://natchitoches.lavns.org/>

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup>

<https://www.ksla.com/2024/09/18/lasalle-corrections-manage-operate-natchitoches-parish-detention-center/>

In 2017, the state of Louisiana began seeing a decline in the number of state inmates which threatened many sheriff's offices budgets.<sup>19</sup> To combat this budget issue and underutilization of the facility, the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center began housing ICE detainees in 2018.<sup>20</sup> ICE detainees are held in the L-Dorm cell block, the additional cellblock that was added on 2000, which consists of "124 beds in four housing units".<sup>21</sup> All of the housing units in this cellblock are described as having "open bay housing . . . with roving officers and control rooms with control room staff monitoring cameras" and consisting of "a dayroom area with tables/chairs, a television, a bank of telephones, board games/cards, and enough showers and wash basins to serve the capacity of the unit."<sup>22</sup>

### **Public Records Request and Inmate Mortality**

While the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office has a website, there is no Public Records Request form available online. The process of submitting a request is not noticeably clear and the sheriff's office/ detention center officials for not extremely helpful in figuring out the process. I contacted both the sheriff's office and the detention center on several occasions to find out who is the point of contact for submitting a Public Records Request. Each time I called I was either told that I was contacting the wrong department, or I reached a voicemail. On one occasion, I was informed that individuals could not submit Public Records Requests for death records, only practicing attorneys could. Relying on information from previous students who investigated the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center, I emailed the Public Records Request to the warden, Major Roger Henson, and sent a physical Public Records Request directly to the facility via certified mail. However, I did not receive any communication back from Major Henson or anyone at the facility and did not receive any information on recent deaths at the facility.

According to the Incarceration Transparency website, Natchitoches Parish Detention Center has not had a death in the facility since 2017 and there have been four deaths in total.<sup>23</sup> However, recent news reports reveal that an inmate died while in custody at the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center in November 2022.<sup>24</sup> An inmate by the name of Carlos Thomas was transferred to the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center on October 14, 2022.<sup>25</sup> During intake, Mr. Thomas had an elevated blood pressure but "allegedly did not receive follow-up care."<sup>26</sup> Mr. Thomas made complaints of chest and back pain on multiple occasions "but detention and nursing staff negligently failed to secure the necessary medical attention for [Mr. Thomas], and

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<sup>19</sup>

[https://www.nola.com/news/as-fewer-inmates-fill-louisiana-jails-wardens-turn-to-immigration-officials-to-fill-bunks-budgets/article\\_0b819a1f-d24b-5107-bbdd-7b29af9a3c3f.html](https://www.nola.com/news/as-fewer-inmates-fill-louisiana-jails-wardens-turn-to-immigration-officials-to-fill-bunks-budgets/article_0b819a1f-d24b-5107-bbdd-7b29af9a3c3f.html)

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.ice.gov/doclib/facilityInspections/natchitochesDcLA\\_CL\\_07-03-2019.pdf](https://www.ice.gov/doclib/facilityInspections/natchitochesDcLA_CL_07-03-2019.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/la-prison-deaths/natchitoches/>

<sup>24</sup>

<https://louisianarecord.com/stories/652878558-lawsuit-filed-against-natchitoches-parish-detention-center-alleging-inmate-died-due-to-lack-of-medical-care>

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

his condition worsened.”<sup>27</sup> On November 10, 2024, Mr. Thomas was found unresponsive and was pronounced dead later that day.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Thomas’ family has filed a lawsuit against the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center in December 2023 alleging “negligence and failure to provide . . . proper medical care.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Jail News Coverage and Transparency**

In addition to news coverage for the recent in custody death, the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center has been in the news for several controversies. In July 2024, a Natchitoches Parish Detention Center correctional officer by the name of Robert Lowring was arrested for one count of malfeasance in office and one count of sexual battery of a female inmate.<sup>30</sup> Following a complaint of misconduct, an investigation was launched and Lowring was later arrested.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, in August 2024, three inmates escaped from the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center. The three inmates were seen “escaping from [a] razor wire fence and running along the Natchitoches Bypass” on the morning of the escape.<sup>32</sup> All three inmates were captured over the weekend of August 16, 2024, with help from the U.S. Marshals Service.<sup>33</sup>

Despite research, I could not find any public briefings or research from advocacy groups about the Natchitoches Parish Detention Center. To find information about the facility, you must look at either the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff’s Office website, the Sheriff’s Office Facebook page, or local news websites. The Sheriff’s Office website features an inmate lookup tab but when clicked, you are redirected to an error message. To find the inmate lookup website, you must search for it online and it appears under a different link than the one listed on the Sheriff’s website. Getting information directly from the Sheriff’s Office/Detention Center official is difficult as they often fail to provide you with the necessary information you are seeking and simply fail to answer the phone and emails or return calls.

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<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup>

<https://www.ksla.com/2024/07/26/natchitoches-corrections-deputy-accused-sexual-abuse-female-inmate/>

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup>

<https://purplemedianetwork.com/17704/news/u-s-marshals-service-detain-last-escaped-inmate-from-natchitoches-parish/#:~:text=The%20manhunt%20over%20the%20last,caught%20Seankalyn%20Chatman%2C%20police%20said.>

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*