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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS

Secretary Gary Westcott

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Contact: Tiffany Dickerson at DOCcommunications@la.gov



New Women's Correctional Facility Opens

Focus on educational programming and services incorporated into design and technology

St. Gabriel, LA – Leaders from the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections held a grand opening ceremony and tour this morning at the newly constructed Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW), which is located in St. Gabriel. Governor Jeff Landry, Secretary Gary Westcott, along with numerous state and local officials attended the ribbon cutting for the state's only female multi-level security correctional facility.

The \$160 million dollar state-of-the-art correctional facility is comprised of 15 buildings and is almost 300,000 square feet. The 958-bed facility features 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. Construction of the new facility, which is located west of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, took approximately three years.

"The new facility was designed with technology and advanced security systems to create a safer environment for not only those within the correctional facility but the surrounding community. From modern surveillance and controlled access systems to emergency response protocols and secure housing units, every feature reflects the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Correction's commitment to safety and efficiency, said Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry. "These innovations not only enhance public safety but also allows the staff to work in an environment that supports their well-being and operational success."

Some of the structures include a gymnasium, kitchen, two dormitories, academic and career and technical education center, postpartum wing, and medical building. LCIW provides continuity of health care for all incarcerated women from admission to discharge. The medical and mental health staff have approximately 58 employees who provide specialized services to female inmates with medical and mental health conditions. LCIW is also a pregnancy management facility.

"The Department takes the dignity, care and treatment of incarcerated women in its custody seriously," said Kristen Thomas, warden, Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women. "Today's grand opening reflects the culmination of many years of extensive work and a centralized new beginning for my staff, the women in our custody and the volunteers who dedicate their service."

In addition to correctional and administrative professionals, LCIW also employs full-time physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, associates to psychologists, a dentist, and various part-time specialty physicians in the fields of radiology, neurology, psychiatry, optometry, and physical therapy. LCIW Warden Kristen Thomas has served in the role since December 2021 and is responsible for the facility's daily operations and management. LCIW currently employs 261 state civil servants and is considered a major employer in the area.

"This investment reflects Louisiana's commitment to modernizing correctional care for women who are incarcerated," said Gary Westcott, secretary, Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections. "The department has been making meaningful strides towards assisting women who have been in our custody, care and treatment to successfully reintegrate back into community life and reunite with their loved ones."

The unprecedented flooding in 2016 devastated the former facility, which opened in 1972 and forced its closure as well as relocation of incarcerated women and staff. The last state-built correctional institutions were Allen Correctional Center located in Allen Parish that opened in 1990 and Raymond Laborde Correctional Center located in Avoyelles Parish that opened in 1989.

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70802 US

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