



## ***Union Releases Video on Substance Exposures Calling for State to Take Immediate Action***

## ***Significant Increase in Staff Exposures Continue Throughout the State with No Relief in Sight***

**September 19, 2025**

**Albany, NY** – NYSCOPBA released a short video today that addresses the union's ongoing concern regarding substance exposures across prisons in New York that have sent sworn and civilian staff and inmates to local hospitals with a variety of symptoms that have included fainting, nausea, vomiting, elevated blood pressure and blurred vision. Several staffers needed to be administered Narcan to reverse the effects. **(Video Link Below)**

The video, featuring President Chris Summers and several news clips of coverage of the incidents, calls on the State to take decisive and immediate action to address and mitigate the surge in exposures, many of which have been caused by substances investigators have not been able to determine.

Since January, dozens of staff members have been transported to local hospitals after developing symptoms while encountering inmates who had overdosed on unknown drugs or contraband that was smuggled into prison. In several situations, the contraband consisted of paper saturated with unknown liquids that staff came into contact with.

NYSCOPBA is calling on the State to develop better screening protocols, stronger detection of the unknown substances and a significant statewide investigation to determine what staff are being exposed to.

In many cases, State and County HAZMAT teams that have responded to these exposures have so far not been able to determine the substances staff are being exposed to, causing further frustration for those who've been endangered.

This week, thirteen staff and six inmates had to be treated for exposures on Monday and Tuesday at Fishkill Correctional Facility. In both incidents, staff began developing symptoms of exposure after coming into contact with inmates who were allegedly intoxicated on unknown substances. Three officers and one nurse at the prison needed to be administered Narcan to reverse the symptoms.

"We are at the point where we're beyond frustrated over what is occurring. Exposures have been occurring for over a year now with no clear explanation of what staff are being exposed to. We understand in most of the exposures, staff have become ill as a result of coming into contact with inmates who were on unknown drugs. Yet, the State has not taken this seriously enough to provide the resources to identify these drugs are and develop protocols to reduce the risks of it occurring again. We are committed to working with DOCCS to enhance the ability to detect drugs coming into prisons. Implementing Legal Mail Scanning was a significant first step the department took to reduce the flow of drugs coming in through fabricated legal mail. Another step DOCCS should take is to fortify the Secure Vendor Program available to inmates and their families. Too many flaws currently exist in the program. Instead of having one secure vendor that can be effectively monitored, there are several vendors that provide packages to inmates through the mail and there are no checks and balances to what is being mailed in those packages. We know contraband is still getting in through that system even though the original intention of the Secure Vendor Program was to put a stop to it.

"It troubles us that HAZMAT teams who have responded to the exposures have not been able to determine what the substances are. We cannot wait until somebody dies to find those answers. The State needs to address this immediately, because the men and women who work in the prisons deserve to come to work knowing their workplace is protected from lethal substances." - stated Chris Summers, NYSCOPBA President.

[NYSCOPBA Chemical Exposures on Vimeo](#)