



New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

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June 23, 2017

Mr. Anthony Annucci
Acting Commissioner
NYS DOCCS
1220 Washington Ave; Building 9
Albany, NY 12226

Dear Commissioner Annucci:

I continue to be saddened and disturbed each and every time I hear of a member that has committed suicide. I am sure you share my concern and the concern of all my brothers and sisters in corrections. While stress is an inevitable part of living and working, job-related stress in the corrections environment escalates the severity.

I am grateful for your approval of the Suicide Prevention and Awareness training that was recommended by the union and funded through contractual monies. As you are aware, we received very positive feedback from the training. However, even with resources available such as EAP Coordinators at the facilities; NYSCOPBA-funded support through professionals that specializes in law enforcement assistance; and training, we are still seeing a frightening rise in officer suicides.

It is time we look at the data and make some decisions based upon the facts regarding the type of assistance offered or the manner in which it is received. As such, I am requesting all information the Department has regarding the annual number of suicides of security staff during the past 20 years (1997 – 2017). If this information is not available through your office, please guide me to where I can obtain what I am requesting.

You are an employer and overseer of employees performing the most stressful jobs on a daily basis. NYSCOPBA has union representatives who are charged with negotiating the safest employment environment possible. We must work together to mitigate the tragic reality that we are losing more security staff to suicide. We must minimize the stressful, hostile working environment as much as possible and equip employees with effective stress management techniques. Reviewing employee suicide data is a first step in determining the best course of action to reverse this trend.

The concern of the Department regarding this issue is paramount in the employee/ employer relationship. I look forward to continuing dialogue with you regarding this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Tammy Sawchuk
Executive Vice President

Cc: Daniel Martuscello, Joseph Bellnier, Darren Ayotte