



New York State
**PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
FEDERATION AFL-CIO**
1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Road
P.O. Box 12414
Albany, NY 12212-2414

(518) 785-1900
(800) 342-4306
Fax (518) 785-1814

April 1, 2020

OFFICERS:

Wayne Spence
President

Kay Alison Wilkie
Secretary-Treasurer

Adreina Adams
Sharon V. DeSilva
Randi DiAntonio
Vice Presidents

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Andrew Puleo
Region 2

Colleen Williams
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Darlene Williams
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Bernadette O'Connor
Region 11

Nora Higgins
Region 12

TRUSTEES:

Christopher Buman
Jeanette Santos
Maddie Shannon-Roberts

Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez
Comissioner, OASAS
1450 Western Avenue
Albany, New York 12203-3526

Dear Commisioner Gonzalez-Sanchez:

The Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO, is writing to you with our list of concerns regarding OASAS' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our members work for OASAS with pride and find their line of work to be deeply fulfilling on both a personal and professional level. Thus, we write to you not only to protect employees' health and safety, but also on behalf of our members who improve the lives of New Yorkers by providing premier addiction services for prevention, treatment and recovery.

We are appreciative that in the past few weeks, dialogue between OASAS and PEF has improved. We also note that OASAS is making inroads in increasing its communication and supporting its staff. Regardless, PEF remains deeply concerned about a number of urgent health and safety issues. As reflected in the daily press conferences of Governor Cuomo, New York is not yet at the apex of this pandemic. Thus, time is of the essence to make substantial changes to OASAS operations to protect our members and the community that OASAS serves.

Our issues are as follows. It is our understanding that with respect to PPE (protective personal equipment), OASAS is now looking for gowns, and that OASAS has ordered supplies of gloves, goggles and masks. PEF is inquiring about what OASAS' plan is to get the necessary PPE to the facilities where they are needed, what OASAS' plan is during a PPE shortage, and how OASAS is advocating for these necessary materials to protect its employees and communities. Moreover, it is our understanding that both patients and staff will be monitored for fever twice a day. Staff have been asked to check their temperatures twice a day—once before coming to work, then again in the evening. Patients with symptoms are to be placed in isolation, and staff with symptoms are to be sent home. In addition, all employees are being asked to sign an attestation that they were informed of this new policy. PEF wants screening of employees to happen, but we need to review said attestation to ensure that it is not overbroad or too intrusive.



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PEF is committed to working with OASAS to ensure the safety of its members, and that the communities they serve are protected during this difficult time. The nature of the pandemic, available resources, and needs of the community all change on a daily basis. PEF is cognizant that this is an extremely taxing, difficult time, and that all sides are working extremely hard.

OASAS needs to step up and address the above-mentioned concerns and questions. We cannot take a “wait and see” approach in a life-or-death situation.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Wayne Spence,
President, Public Employees Federation