



Dwayne C. Sampson, Chair  
DeAnna Hoskins, Vice Chair  
Rachael Bedard, M.D.  
Robert L. Cohen, M.D.  
Felipe Franco  
Jacqueline Miriam Pitts  
Joseph Ramos  
Jacqueline Sherman  
Jude Torchenaud

**BOARD OF CORRECTION**  
**CITY OF NEW YORK**  
2 LAFAYETTE STREET, SUITE 1221  
NEW YORK, NY 10007  
212 669-7900 (Office)

Jasmine Georges-Yilla  
*Executive Director*

## **NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF CORRECTION RELEASES ASSESSMENT ON THE USE OF CHEMICAL AGENTS IN NEW YORK CITY JAILS**

*14 recommendations made to address the use of excessive and unnecessary force in the jails.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** February 21, 2024

New York, NY – The **New York City Board of Correction** (“BOC” or “Board”), the independent oversight Board for the City’s jail system, released a report today presenting findings and recommendations in connection with its systemic assessment of the Department of Correction’s use of chemical agents. The report identifies patterns of unnecessary and excessive force, during which chemical agents are routinely deployed against people in custody—disproportionally individuals with mental illness and emerging adults (aged 18-21)—who present passive resistance, argue with staff, or attempt to inflict self-harm with a ligature.

“This report covers only one month of unnecessary, inappropriate and dangerous overuse of chemical agents in the jails,” said Board Member **Robert Cohen**. “The Department’s failure to prevent this dangerous practice contributes substantially to the violence in the jails. It must end.”

Unlike reviews and investigations conducted by other City and State agencies, the Board’s assessment focuses, not on criminal wrongdoing or staff discipline, but on the circumstances surrounding deployments of chemical agents, with the goal of identifying harmful patterns and preventing their recurrence. The Board’s report makes 14 recommendations concerning DOC practices. These include recommendations to ensure compliance with mandatory annual chemical agent trainings; prevent the assignment of chemical agent devices to uniformed staff with expired certifications; increase the use of body worn cameras in NYC jails; and increase the occurrence of required mental health interventions prior to the application of anticipated force by DOC uniformed staff.

Specific policy violations and practice concerns uncovered in the report include the use of chemical agents from prohibited and unsafe distances; the use of chemical agents on people attempting to hang themselves; and the use of a powerful chemical agent designed for crowd control on lone individuals offering passive resistance. The report also tracks a significant increase in the

Department's use of chemical agents in recent years and provides information regarding the strength of the chemical agent most typically used by the Department.

“This report highlights the important and vital role of the Board of Correction as DOC and CHS's independent oversight agency,” said Executive Director **Jasmine Georges-Yilla**. “Board staff have uncovered patterns and practices concerning the deployment of chemical agents that must be addressed and reformed to ensure a safe environment for those who live and work on Rikers Island. The Board will continue to hold DOC and CHS accountable for maintaining humane conditions inside the City's jails, and Board staff will continue to work with DOC and CHS to ensure that the Board's minimum standards are met across all facilities.”

---

The New York City Board of Correction is a nine-person oversight board that regulates, monitors, and inspects the correctional facilities of the city. The Board of Correction has carried out critical independent oversight for the City of New York since 1957. Our staff are the Board's “eyes and ears” inside the jails, working to evaluate complaints, review incidents, and make recommendations for compliance with the minimum standards for confinement. The Board sets a baseline for what New York City must provide to people in custody in order to maintain humane jails.

Contact: Melissa Cintrón Hernández ([mcintronhernandez@boc.nyc.gov](mailto:mcintronhernandez@boc.nyc.gov))