

MCO AND COLLEGE TEAM UP TO OFFER FREE CLASSES

Here at MCO, we often talk about all the benefits of membership. Now we can add free college to that list. Yes, you read that right: **free college**.

MCO does not pay for this benefit. It is offered by a college to union members.

MCO and SEIU have partnered with Eastern Gateway Community College in Ohio to offer free online classes to dues-paying members and their families. [Read our full announcement for details.](#)

You don't have to wait for September to start – classes begin every 8 weeks. The next start date is March 18. There are a few steps to apply and verify your union

membership, so if you want to start classes March 18, start the process today.

A union is more than just a contract. A strong union can help members and their families with the things that matter most, as this free program illustrates. Through collaboration and partnerships, we can develop programs that will make a deep impact on members' and families' lives. All of us should be rethinking what a union is and what it should mean for each of us.

MCO [announced the free college benefit](#) Friday in an email to members' home email. Did you miss it? [Subscribe to our emails](#) with your personal – not .gov – email now.

[Click to view/print the flyer.](#)

WHAT MCO MEMBERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FENTANYL EXPOSURE AT WORK

If a corrections officer or forensic security assistant is exposed to fentanyl or another harmful opioid on the job, is that exposure covered under current Michigan workers compensation laws?

The answer, according to the Workers Compensation Agency and the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), is that “[for] an injury to be compensable (covered) under the Workers’ Disability Compensation Act, [it] must arise out of and in the course of employment. Thus, if an employee is exposed to any foreign substance that causes injury meeting this criteria, it would be covered.”

MCO asked for clarification on this important issue after dozens of staff at an Ohio prison were exposed to a

mixture of heroine and fentanyl. [According to a news story](#), the exposure raised questions about whether Ohio workers compensation laws covered the testing, diagnosis, and hospital treatment of impacted staff.

Fearing this indecisiveness could be a problem in Michigan, MCO Director of Government Affairs Jeremy Tripp reached out to State Representative Sarah Anthony to tackle the issue and determine if legislation was needed to protect MCO members. Through back and forth emails with the representative’s office and LARA officials, the consensus was that this type of exposure on the job would be covered by current state law. Keep in mind, all worker’s compensation cases are examined on a

case-by-case basis.

While legislation for this issue seems unnecessary at this time, staff safety has been and remains MCO’s number one priority. During the 2019-2020 legislative session, MCO will continue to push for the introduction of a bill that allows COs to carry and administer opioid antagonists like naloxone, also known as Narcan. This is vital not only for inmate safety, but for officer safety in case of an exposure. Legislators considered a bill during the last session, but it didn’t pass due to time limits.

MCO will continue to stay up to date with corrections trends and news around the country and ask how we can be proactive in Michigan to protect the safety and security of our prisons.

MARQUETTE OFFICER, NURSE ASSAULTED BY INMATES

A Marquette inmate punched an officer in the face Feb. 4.

The Level V prisoner in G-unit approached the CO’s desk and started swinging. Staff from that unit and other units immediately responded. The officer went to a local emergency room and returned to work. The inmate went to segregation.

A nurse was also assaulted by an inmate Feb. 11. The prisoner, who was in a medical observation area, punched her through his bars. She was taken to a hospital for a concussion, staff said.

On Feb. 10, three officers were dressed out by prisoners in D-unit, which is segregation.

Stay safe.

In Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s first State of the State address Feb. 12, she said state workers need more support. MCO President Byron Osborn gave a state employee’s perspective on the State of the State to the Lansing State Journal.

[Read the article now.](#)