

Alter Staffing Pattern in Emergency Medical Service Advanced Life Support Ambulances

Savings: \$6 million annually

The fire department's Emergency Medical Service (EMS) currently staffs 208 Advanced Life Support (ALS) and 582 Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance tours each day. The latter are staffed with two emergency medical technicians (EMTs); in contrast, two higher-skilled and more highly paid paramedics are deployed in ALS ambulance units. This option proposes staffing ALS units operated by the fire department with one paramedic and one EMT as opposed to two paramedics. Budgetary savings would result from lower personnel costs as the number of fire department paramedics is allowed to decline by attrition while hiring additional EMTs to take their place.

New York City is the only jurisdiction in the state where Advanced Life Support ambulances are required to have two paramedics. Regulations governing ambulance staffing in New York State are issued by entities known as regional emergency medical services councils. The membership of each council consists of physicians from public and private hospitals as well as local emergency medical services providers. There is a council with responsibility solely for New York City, the New York City Regional Emergency Medical Advisory Council (NYC-REMSCO).

In 2005, the city unsuccessfully petitioned NYC-REMSCO for permission to staff ALS ambulance units with one paramedic and one EMT, with the city contending "there is no published data that shows improved clinical effectiveness by ALS ambulances that are staffed with two paramedics." In January 2009, the Bloomberg Administration again expressed its intention to approach NYC-REMSCO with a similar request, but thus far the double-paramedic staffing policy applicable to the city remains in place.

Proponents might argue as the fire department did in 2005, that staffing ALS ambulances with one paramedic (accompanied by an EMT) would not jeopardize public safety. They might also argue that rather than seeking to attain the full budgetary savings associated with allowing paramedic staffing to decline, the fire department could instead take advantage of having the flexibility to staff ALS ambulances with only one paramedic and thereby boost the total number of ambulances staffed with at least one paramedic without requiring the hiring of additional paramedics. This in turn would enhance the agency's ability to deploy paramedics more widely across the city and improve response times for paramedic-staffed ambulances to ALS incidents. During the first six months of calendar year 2018 only 54 percent of ALS incidents were responded to within 10 minutes by a paramedic.

Opponents might argue that the city should not risk the diminished medical expertise that could result from the removal of one of the two paramedics currently assigned to ALS units. They might also argue that a more appropriate solution to the city's desire to deploy paramedics in a more widespread manner would be to increase their pay and improve working conditions, thereby enhancing the city's ability to recruit and retain such highly skilled emergency medical personnel.

Eliminate City Dollars and Contracts for Excellence Funds For Teacher Coaches

Savings: \$17 million annually

Coaches work to improve teachers' knowledge of academic subjects and help educators become better pedagogues. Instructional expertise is an important goal because research indicates that of all factors under a school's control, teacher quality has the greatest effect on student achievement. When coaches are successful, they give teachers the ability to help students meet challenging academic standards and they also give teachers better classroom management skills. Under this option the Department of Education (DOE) would essentially eliminate city and unrestricted state funding for teacher coaches and rely instead on other professional development programs to help teachers improve their performance.

Coaches are one piece in a large array of ongoing professional development programs in the city's schools. The DOE provides a variety of opportunities to teachers at all levels including "model" and "master" teachers, lead teachers, after school "in-service" courses, and (online) staff development. DOE continues to work to align teacher support and supervision with the demands of the new Common Core curriculum and also to use technology to support teacher effectiveness. Some professional development activities are school-based while others are administered citywide.

In the 2018-2019 school year, \$22 million from a variety of funding sources (down from \$49 million in recent years) is expected to be spent on math, literacy, and special education coaches. Forty-five percent (\$10 million) of these expenditures are funded with city dollars. There is also nearly \$6 million in state Contracts for Excellence money dedicated to coaches that can be redirected for other school needs.

Proponents might argue that city funding for teacher coaches is not necessary given the DOE's myriad professional development offerings and funding from federal grants like Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title II—Improving Teacher Quality, which is intended for professional development. Similarly, they could point out that although in New York State the federal government has waived the specific set-asides from a school's Title I allocation for teacher development, those funds can still be used to support coaching positions.

Opponents might argue that if professional development is a priority then it should be supported with adequate city funding. Opponents can also argue that reliance on grants could put these positions in jeopardy if the funding disappears over time. They can also say that the schools are supposed to have a high level of autonomy and should have many options for providing professional development to their teaching staff.

Eliminate City Paid Union Release Time

Savings: \$30 million in the first year

Most, if not all, of New York City's collective bargaining agreements contain provisions relating to union release time. In most cases they mandate that Executive Order 75, issued in March 1973, governs the conduct of labor relations by union officials and representatives. The Executive Order delineates union activities eligible for paid union leave (such as investigation of grievances and negotiations with the Office of Labor Relations) and other union activities eligible only for unpaid leave. The Office of Labor Relations determines who is eligible for paid union release time. In 2018, approximately 193 employees of city agencies were on paid full-time union release, such as unions' presidents and vice presidents. Another 55 were scheduled for part-time paid union release. In 2018, 2,062 additional employees were approved to take paid union leave on an occasional basis. By far, the New York City Police Department had the most employees on preapproved union leave with 51 on full-time and 16 on part-time city paid union leave.

Under this option, the city would no longer pay for union release time. Union release time will be granted, but without pay. If this option were to be adopted, unions would have to decide whether to compensate their members who take union release time. This option would save the city \$29.7 million in 2019, with the savings increasing by about \$700,000 each year thereafter. Implementation would require collective bargaining with the municipal unions, an amendment to Executive Order 75, and a change in the Administrative Code. Changes to the state's Taylor Law might also be necessary.

Proponents might argue that the city should not subsidize work performed by its employees for any private entity, including a labor union. Others might argue that it is inappropriate to ask city taxpayers to fund paid union leave because some activities of those on leave, such as political organizing, may not serve the public interest. Some might argue that forcing unions to bear the costs of their activities would motivate unions to make their operations more efficient, benefitting union members, in addition to the city. Finally, some might argue that it is unfair for the city to pay for union leave time when nonunion employees do not have city-funded individuals to address their grievances and concerns.

Opponents might argue that the 40-year tradition of granting paid leave to union officials has been an efficient arrangement for addressing union members' concerns and conflicts with management—less costly and less time-consuming than formal grievance arbitration. They might argue that if unions were to compensate those on union leave in lieu of city pay, this option would result in higher costs to union members through increased union dues. Finally, others might argue that eliminating city-paid union leave time would undermine the union's effectiveness in responding to grievances and in bargaining matters, which in turn would hurt worker morale, reduce productivity, and add other costs to unions' operations.

Have the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Administer Certain Civil Service Exams

Savings: \$4 million annually

This option, modeled on a recommendation included in the January 2011 report of the NYC Workforce Reform Task Force, involves giving the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) responsibility for developing and administering their own civil service exams for two affiliates: NYC Transit (NYCT) and MTA Bridges and Tunnels. Currently, the city has responsibility for civil service administration for about 200,000 employees, including around 40,000 who actually work for these two units of the MTA. Transferring responsibility for the civil service exams to the MTA would require a change in state law.

The city's Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) develops and administers civil service exams for these two units of the MTA, with some assistance from the transportation entities themselves. DCAS has estimated that it costs about \$4 million per year to develop and administer the tests. The MTA is willing to absorb this cost, if given full control over the exams. The New York State Civil Service Commission would continue to have ultimate jurisdiction over these employees.

Before the MTA was created, NYCT and MTA Bridges and Tunnels (then known as the Triborough Bridge & Tunnel Authority) were operated by the city. Both entities became part of the MTA, a state public authority, in 1968. However, state law currently stipulates that the city maintain civil service jurisdiction over these transportation providers because of their original establishment as city agencies.

Proponents might argue that because NYCT and MTA Bridges and Tunnels are not city agencies, the city should not be in charge of the authority's civil service exams. The MTA is well-equipped to develop and administer the exams, something it already does for its other affiliates.

Proponents could also note that the MTA argues that if it controlled the process, it could fill vacant positions at NYCT and MTA Bridges and Tunnels more quickly because it would have greater incentive to process the exams promptly.

Opponents might argue that having a third party, in this case the city, develop and administer the civil service exams keeps the process more impartial. Some union representatives and state legislators have expressed support for the current arrangement given the often-contentious state of labor-management relations at the MTA. Opponents are concerned that giving the MTA more administrative responsibility for civil service at these two units could make it easier for the MTA to move titles into "noncompetitive" status, which offers no statutory protection against layoffs

Increase the Workweek for Municipal Employees to 40 Hours

Savings: \$234 million in the first year, growing to \$767 million in three years

This proposal would increase to 40 the number of hours worked by roughly 76,200 nonmanagerial, nonschool based, full-time civilian employees, currently scheduled to work either 35 hours or 37.5 hours per week. Uniformed employees and school-based employees at the Department of Education and the City University of New York would be excluded. With city employees working a longer week, agencies could generate the same output with fewer employees and thus save on wages, payroll taxes, pension costs, and fringe benefits.

If all employees who currently work 35 hours a week instead work 40 hours, the city would require 12.5 percent fewer workers to cover the same number of hours. Similarly, increasing the hours of all employees who currently work 37.5 hours per week to 40 hours would allow the city to use about 6 percent fewer workers. Controlling for the exclusion of small city agencies as well as work units or locations that would have a hard time producing the same output with fewer employees, IBO estimates that 8,325 positions could be eliminated if this proposal were implemented—or about 11 percent of nonmanagerial, nonschool-based, full-time civilian positions.

Assuming that the city would gradually achieve the potential staff reductions under this proposal by attrition as opposed to layoffs, savings in the first year could be \$234 million, increasing to \$767 million annually by in three years.

This proposal would require collective bargaining.

Proponents might argue that the fiscal challenges facing the city justify implementation of this proposal calling for increased productivity on the part of thousands of city workers. They might also argue that many private-sector employers require 40-hour work weeks, as does the federal government and numerous other public-sector jurisdictions. They also could point out that, on a smaller scale, there already is precedent in New York City government for this option. Since August 2004, newly hired probation officers work 40 hours per week instead of the previous 37.5 hours per week, with no additional pay—a provision agreed to in collective bargaining with the United Probation Officers Association.

Opponents might argue that requiring city workers to work an increased number of hours per week without additional compensation—equivalent to reduced pay per hour—would simply be unfair. They might also argue that lower productivity could result from worker fatigue, which, in turn, would keep the city from achieving the full savings projected from implementation of this option.

Institute Time Limits for Excessed Teachers In the Absent Teacher Reserve Pool

Savings: \$84 million annually

Excessed teachers are educators who have no full-time teaching position in their current school. Teachers in the absent teacher reserve (ATR) pool are teachers who were excessed and did not find a permanent position in any school by the time the new school year began. Current policy dictates that ATR pool members are placed into schools by the Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality in teaching positions matching their license area. Reserve teachers remain in schools on monthly assignments and can also perform day to day substitute classroom coverage while seeking a permanent assignment. Using teachers in the ATR for short- and long-term vacancies that might otherwise be filled with substitute teachers generates savings for the Department of Education (DOE). Revised provisions concerning the ATR were put in place under a 2009 agreement between the DOE and the United Federation of Teachers; these have been modified at number of times, most recently in 2017. The current agreement is slated to remain in effect through the 2018-2019 school year.

Principals only have to consider up to two candidates from the ATR for any given vacancy in a school term before hiring a substitute teacher from outside the pool. Additionally, there is no minimum amount of time that a teacher from the ATR may remain in an assignment and the principal has the power to remove an ATR teacher at any time. Any further changes to the ATR policy would likely need to be collectively bargained.

Under this option teachers would be dismissed after a year in the ATR pool without obtaining a permanent position. This year, the city is on track to spend \$120 million on 1,210 excessed teachers in the pool; within this group, 837 teachers earning a total of \$83.8 million in salary and fringe benefits had also been in the pool in the prior year.

If teachers are dismissed after a year in the ATR pool, the reserve pool would shrink. Moreover, some teachers in the pool would be more aggressive in seeking permanent positions. The estimated savings account for the extra costs that would be incurred by schools forced to use more per diem substitutes due to fewer teachers in the ATR pool.

Proponents might argue that the the DOE can no longer afford to keep teachers on the payroll who are not assigned to the classroom. They can also argue that an agreement to go on interviews while drawing a paycheck does not create the same urgency to find a permanent position as does the possibility of losing employment if not rehired within a specific time frame.

Opponents might argue that ATR teachers are no longer sitting idle—they are being used as substitutes. They could also argue that being excessed is not always the individual teacher's fault and they should not be further penalized with time limits because ATR teachers have little control over how quickly they can find a new position. Opponents could also argue that ATR teachers are distracted from seeking permanent positions because they must work as fill-in substitutes and clerks. Additionally, many in the pool are more experienced so they are at a disadvantage in competing for open slots because they earn higher salaries that must be paid out of the principal's school budget.

Share One Parent Coordinator and General or Procurement Secretary Among Co-located Schools

Savings: \$18 million annually

Over the past 14 years, many large public schools in New York City have been closed and multiple smaller schools have opened in their place, often sharing space in the buildings that formerly housed single large schools. In the 2018-2019 school year, there are roughly 1,800 schools located in 1,320 buildings. These schools typically have space sharing arrangements for rooms such as libraries, gymnasiums, and lunch rooms. Under this option, multiple schools located in one physical building would also share certain noninstructional staff, such as secretaries and parent coordinators.

New York State education law 100.2 specifies that each school must have a full-time principal who oversees the appointment and supervision of school staff. However, the law does not specify that an individual school must have its own secretary or parent coordinator.

The city's fiscal year 2019 budget allocates about \$64 million for about 1,500 parent coordinator positions. The average salary plus fringe benefits is about \$61,100. If the city hired only one parent coordinator per school building, 185 positions would be reduced, saving about \$11 million. In the 2018-2019 school year, schools employ almost 1,400 secretaries who perform general services or procurement duties. Schools also employ additional secretaries who perform payroll or timekeeping duties. General services and procurement secretaries have an average salary plus fringe benefits of \$84,616, so if each school building employed only one, savings would add up to more than \$6 million.

Together, savings from sharing these noninstructional staff among schools in shared facilities could save the city \$18 million.

Proponents might argue that many new small schools have opened in large school buildings that previously housed only one school and in most cases was served by only one general services or procurement secretary and one parent coordinator. They could also point out that some co-located schools already share other staff such as librarians and that the Department of Education has allowed the elimination of parent coordinators at certain schools in the past. In addition, they might also argue that because other types of secretaries employed by individual schools also perform various administrative duties, more than one general services secretary per building is redundant.

Opponents might argue that maintaining these positions for each school in a building helps those schools maintain their own identity. Sharing positions would also create uncertainty in terms of the supervisory chain of command and might undermine the DOE's mandate that each Principal be the "CEO" of their school. It would also result in schools being treated differently, with those not sharing facilities having an advantage over schools that are co-located since they would not be sharing personnel.

Use E-Learning When High School Teachers Are Absent for Just a Few Days

Savings: \$9 million annually

Under this option, high schools with a teacher who is absent fewer than three consecutive days would no longer use per diem substitutes but rather assign students an “e-learning” period for the affected class session. Use of per diem substitutes would decline, producing savings for the education department. While teachers from the absent teacher reserve pool are used for longer-term absences, schools continue to use and pay for per-diem substitutes for short-term and unplanned absences. In the 2015 school year, high school budgets included a total of \$23.7 million for per-diem teacher absence coverage, \$15.5 million of which was funded with city funds.

Over the course of the 2015 school year, teachers in city high schools missed a total of 96,000 school days due to absences of three days or less. Such short-term absences account for 97 percent of all classroom teacher absences; 84 percent of absences were for a single day. Currently, the Department of Education is required to cover every teacher absence with an appropriate substitute. Under this option, rather than a school calling in substitutes who are paid on a per diem basis, students would instead be directed to online assignments. Online lessons during teacher absences would ideally be related to the current class syllabus, credit recovery, or extra credit. The material could also be a way to improve software and programming skills. Implementation would probably require collective bargaining with the teachers union.

If this option were fully implemented, the only high school per diem substitutes needed would be those engaged for a full term. Based on a per diem rate of \$155 per day, the total cost of covering one-, two-, and three-day absences in high schools was \$17.4 million. We estimate that up to half of the savings associated with eliminating these hires would be offset by costs for technology such as connectivity, broadband/bandwidth requirements, software licensing, and hardware. Given that there is much to learn about the effectiveness of such instructional material and the logistics of having students using it on a regular basis, the program could be run as a pilot in a subset of high schools to gain experience and assess its viability. If the option were implemented as a pilot, the estimated savings would be lower.

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