



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE

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May 26, 2021

Hon. Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Borough President Brewer:

At your request, IBO has updated our 2019 estimates of the cost of providing at least one social worker at every school that serves students in grades kindergarten through 12. For this school year—2020-2021—we estimate it would cost up to \$62 million to add a social worker to each of the 423 traditional public schools in Community School Districts 1-32 that currently do not have one. When we provided our earlier estimate to you in May 2019, the cost was higher at \$89 million because there were 671 schools without a social worker that school year, over 50 percent more schools than this year. There are an additional 25 schools in District 75 (the citywide special education administrative district) that would require another social worker, at a total cost of up to \$4 million this school year—essentially unchanged from the cost of adding 27 social workers at District 75 schools that we estimated two years ago.

There are 166 schools in Community School Districts 1-32 that share social workers and have less than full-time coverage. To bring those 166 schools up to at least one full-time social worker would cost an additional \$19 million to hire 127 more full-time equivalent (FTE) social workers. Schools without full-time social workers tended to be in Brooklyn or were small, with 400 or fewer students enrolled last school year. The number of schools with only a part-time social worker is much greater than it was two years ago largely because many schools that did not have any social workers two years ago now have part-time coverage. However, roughly 90 percent of schools with part-time coverage have a social worker for 25 percent of the time or less.

Much of the difference between our May 2019 estimate and today's is attributable to the inclusion of funds to hire additional school support staff (school crisis responders, guidance counselors, and social workers) as part of the 2020 Adopted Budget, which was approved in June 2019. From 2018-2019 through 2020-2021, there was an increase of 127 full-time social workers bringing the total to 1,447 this year. Part-time social workers were also added over the same period, bringing the total number of FTE social workers working part-time at schools up by 60, to 75 FTE positions this year—a four-fold increase.

Based on the Mayor's Executive Budget for fiscal year 2022, the de Blasio Administration plans to add 500 school-based social workers for next school year (2021-2022). IBO's

analysis indicates that even with this planned increase and assuming the addition was on a FTE basis, the school system would still need a further increase of 75 full-time equivalent social worker positions to bring at least one full-time social worker to every school in Districts 1-32 and 75.

The share of schools without social workers has declined over the past two years. In the current 2020-2021 school year, 423 schools—roughly 28 percent—of the 1,525 traditional public schools in Districts 1-32 do not have any social workers, compared with 44 percent of schools in May 2019. Salary and fringe benefits for social workers currently average \$145,569: an average salary of \$102,985 plus fringe benefits averaging \$42,584. Based on these averages, the cost of providing 423 additional full-time social workers this year would have totaled \$62 million. It is likely that hiring new, generally more junior social workers would cost less, so our estimate likely provides an upper bound. Looking at the distribution by borough, more than 100 schools each in Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan do not currently have any social workers—together the three boroughs account for over three-quarters of the total number of social workers that would be needed.

An additional \$19 million would have been required to bring the 166 traditional public schools that currently have social workers only part of the time up to full-time coverage. Citywide, it would require the addition of 127 full-time equivalent social worker positions across the 166 schools, assuming the locations of the schools would allow those positions to be shared. Just over half of these schools (84 schools) currently have a social worker 17 percent to 20 percent of the time and about a third of these schools (56 schools) have a social worker 25 percent of the time. An additional 6 percent of schools have a social worker about 14 percent of the time and the remaining 10 percent of schools have a social worker between 33 percent and 85 percent of the time. Looking at the location and size of these schools, roughly 45 percent of the schools (75 schools) are in Brooklyn and almost half (78 schools) of these schools are small—with total enrollment last school year of 400 or fewer students. Finally, 94 percent of these schools (156 schools) participated in the School Response Clinician program—a joint partnership between the Department of Education and the Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health under the city’s ThriveNYC umbrella. The program dispatches licensed social workers to support students facing crises to provide onsite clinical counseling or connect students with long-term care providers.

Of the 166 schools that currently have part-time coverage, 144 (87 percent) had no social workers two years ago. Of the remaining schools, 16 had part-time social workers and 5 had full-time social workers two years earlier. (One school was newly opened within the past two years.) The increased use of part-time social workers this year does not appear to be a consequence of Covid-19 disruptions as nearly as many schools in the 2019-2020 school year—prior to the onset of the pandemic—had some social worker coverage but needed additional staffing to bring those schools up to full-time coverage.

In District 75 there are 25 schools without social workers this year; staffing all of those positions with full-time social workers would have required \$4 million. As with schools in Districts 1-32, schools in District 75 in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens would add the largest number of social workers (eight, seven, and six, respectively). There are four District 75 schools

in the Bronx without a social worker. In contrast, none of the four District 75 schools in Staten Island are without a social worker.

In the attached memo you can find more details on the change in total social workers from last school year (2019-2020) to this school year (2020-2021)—citywide as well as for three programs that provide funds to targeted schools for social workers. We also compared each school's student to social worker ratio.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at ronniel@ibo.nyc.ny.us or Sarita Subramanian (who coordinated the study) at saritas@ibo.nyc.ny.us.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Lowenstein

Director

The Greatest Number of Social Workers in Districts 1-32 Would be Added in Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan

Dollars in millions

Borough	Number of Schools	Number of Schools with No Social Workers	Number of Schools with at Least One Full-Time Social Worker	Number of Schools with Only Part-Time Social Workers	Total Cost for Schools with No Social Workers	Total Cost for Schools with Only Part-Time Social Workers
Bronx	354	85	243	26	\$12	\$2
Brooklyn	463	109	279	75	16	3
Manhattan	292	100	169	23	15	8
Queens	344	111	196	37	16	4
Staten Island	72	18	49	5	3	1
TOTAL	1,525	423	936	166	\$62	\$9

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education Data, Report on Guidance Counselors Pursuant to Local Law 56 of 2014, published March 26, 2021

New York City Independent Budget Office

Memorandum

Date: May 14, 2021

From: Jeannie Kim

To: Sarita Subramanian

Subject: Borough President Brewer Request on Social Workers

IBO Calculations of Total Social Workers and Average Student to Social Worker Ratios for All Schools and Special Programs

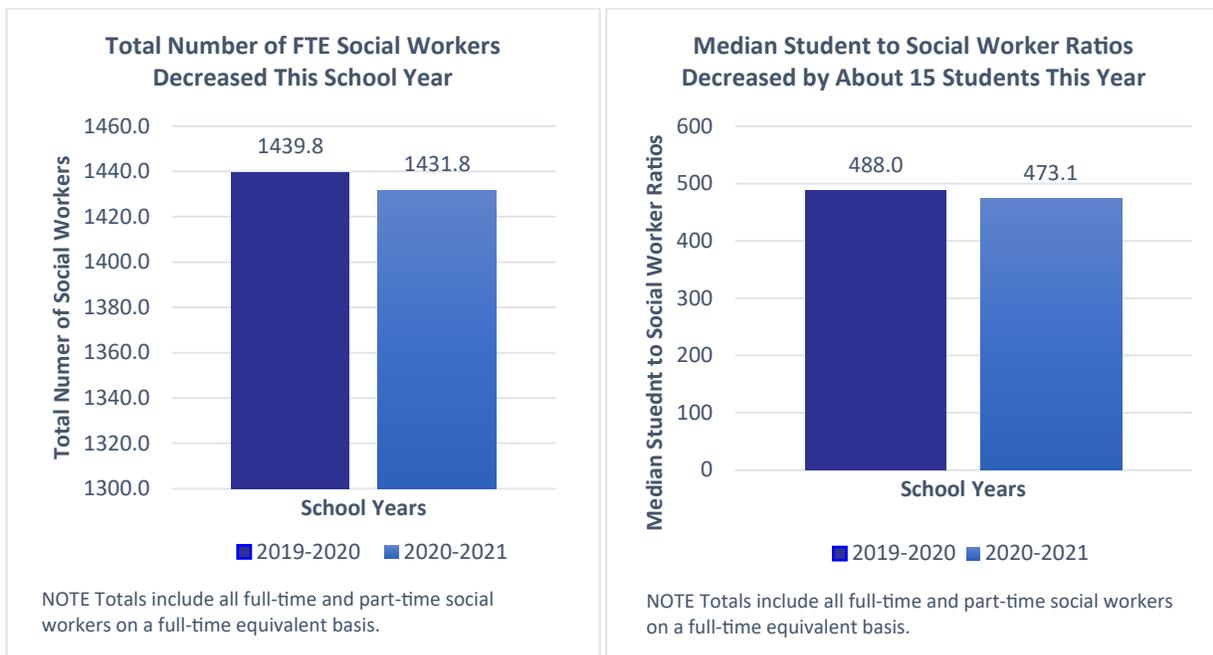
The city's proposed Mental Health Plan includes the addition of 150 social workers in neighborhoods hardest-hit by Covid-19 for next school year. In recent years the Department of Education (DOE) has added funding to increase staffing of social workers for programs targeting schools in need of additional counseling supports. These programs include the Single Shepherd, Bridging the Gap, School Response Clinician (SRC) programs, and high needs schools. The Single Shepherd Program, initiated in 2016, aims to pair every middle and high school student in districts with the lowest high school graduation and college attainment rates in the city with a counselor or social worker. Currently, the Single Shepherd Program is only in Districts 7 and 23. The Bridging the Gap program, also launched in 2016, seeks to provide social workers at schools with the highest concentrations of students living in shelters. The School Response Clinician program is a partnership between the Department of Education and the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health under the city's ThriveNYC umbrella. The program provides licensed social workers to support students facing crises through onsite clinical counseling or by connecting students with long-term care providers. Finally, a number of schools designated as high needs based on behavioral incidents, mental health crises, and school environment surveys that also lack a full-time social worker have received funding to hire additional social workers.

Local Law 56, passed in 2014, requires the Department of Education to submit an annual report on school guidance counselors to the City Council. These reports also include data on school social workers. With the release of the [2021 Guidance Counselor and Social Worker data](#), IBO compared the total number of social workers from this school year (2020-2021) with last school year (2019-2020). We first looked at all schools in Districts 1-32 and 75 (the citywide special education district) and then at schools and districts associated with the four programs designed to increase social workers in schools.

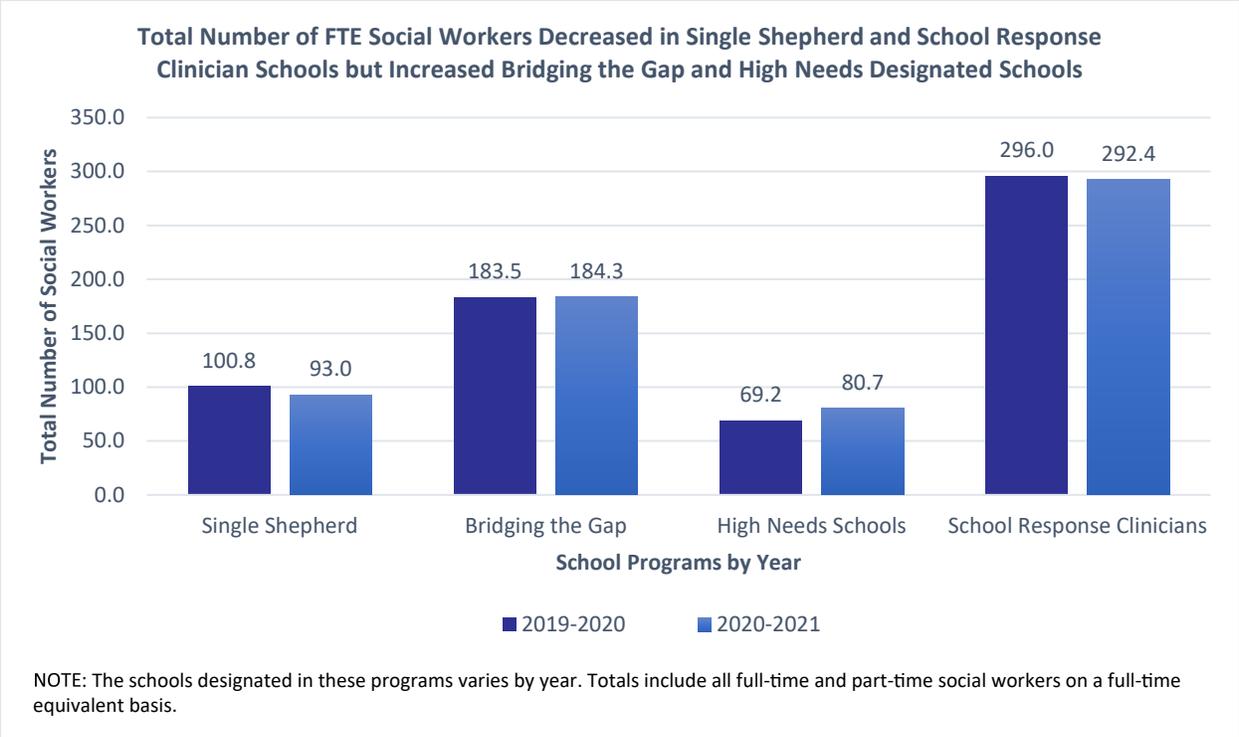
IBO also compared median student to social worker ratios for the two years. The DOE calculates these ratios using enrollment data from the previous school year. To be consistent, we followed the same methodology, except for schools without social workers. For those schools, the DOE designated the total enrollment as the ratio. In contrast, IBO did not assign ratios for those schools since there is no social worker to include in the calculation.

The data included 1,584 schools in 2019-2020 and 1,586 schools in 2020-2021. There were 461 schools without social workers in 2019-2020 and 448 in 2020-2021; IBO excluded these schools from student to social worker ratio calculations. In 2019-2020, 3 out of 45 Single Shepherd schools and 18 out of 84 High Needs schools did not have social workers. In 2020-2021, 2 out of 44 Single Shepherd schools, and 3 out of 79 High Needs schools had no social workers. All Bridging the Gap schools had social workers both years. In 2020-2021, 295 schools had School Response Clinician programs—2 more schools than in 2019-2020.

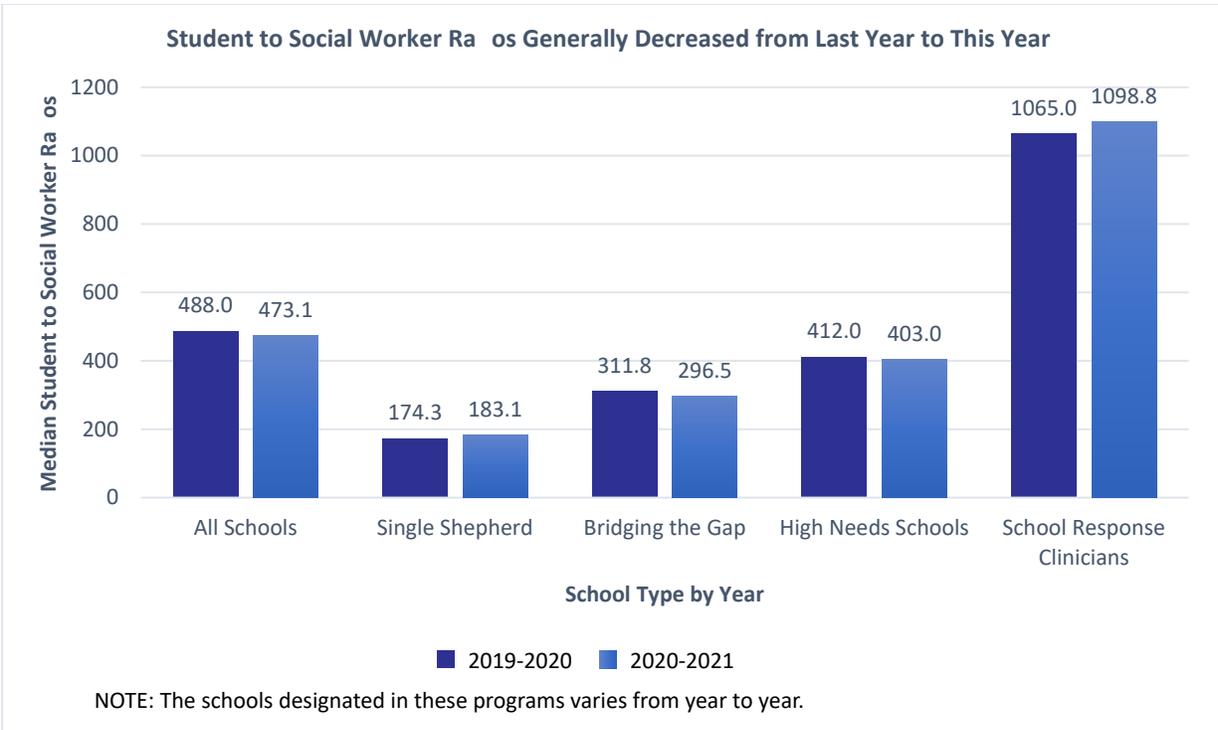
For all schools citywide included in our analysis, the total number of social workers decreased slightly, although there were generally fewer students to each social worker in schools in 2020-2021. When IBO reports “social workers,” we refer to total full-time equivalent (FTE) social workers, including both full-time and part-time employees. There are a total of 1,431.8 FTE social workers this year and there were 1439.8 FTE social workers last year. In both years, the maximum number of social workers at any school was seven. IBO also looked at the change in each school’s ratio from last year to this year. The range in the year-over-year change in ratios for each school is wide. However, among 683 schools whose ratios declined, only 25 percent experienced a decrease in their ratio by more than 58.3 students per social worker. When IBO arrayed schools in order of their student to social worker ratios, the median school in 2020-2021 had a ratio of 473.1, 14.9 students fewer than the ratio of 488.0 for the median school in 2019-2020.



From 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, the total number of FTE social workers in Single Shepherd schools *decreased* by nearly eight FTEs, or roughly 8 percent. The number of FTE social workers in the Bridging the Gap program essentially remained the same, rising by less than 1 percent, while schools designated as High Needs saw the number of FTE social workers increase by nearly 17 percent. The total number of FTE social workers in schools with school response clinicians decreased by 3.6 FTEs, about a 1 percent decrease from 2019-2020.



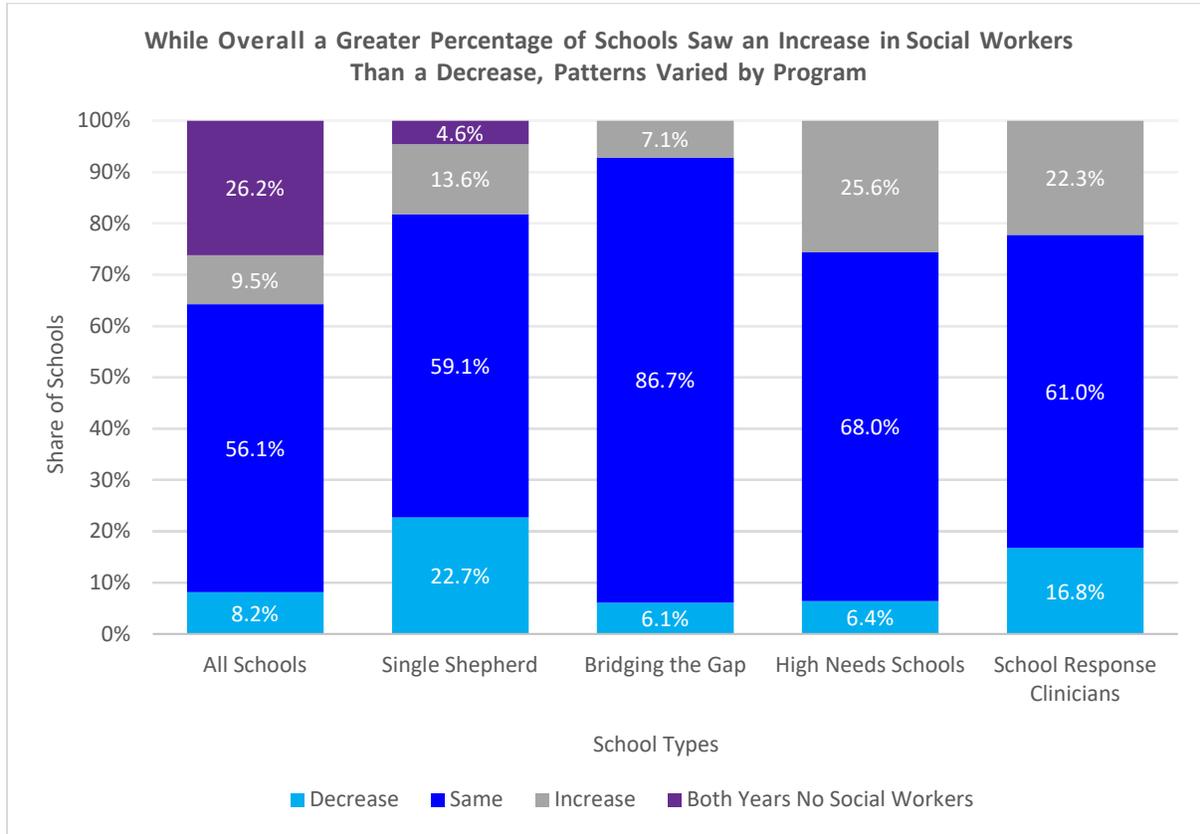
IBO also compared year-over-year student to social worker ratios for each of these school programs. All of the programs, except for schools with SRCs, had median student to social worker ratios that were lower than the median across all schools. While schools in the Single Shepherd program saw a slight increase in their median ratios, they remain much lower than those of schools citywide or Bridging the Gap and High Needs designated schools. Student to social worker ratios are higher in schools with SRCs because those schools have more part-time staff.



Finally, IBO categorized each school by its change in total number of FTE social workers and separately for the change in the student to social worker ratios from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. We split schools into three groups to indicate whether a school experienced a decrease, no change, or an increase in the total number of FTE social workers. We repeated this exercise using each school’s student to social worker ratio with two modifications. First, IBO arrayed schools in terms of the absolute value of percent change in student to social worker ratios from smallest to greatest and the median absolute percent change was 4.9. Because ratios can change even with small fluctuations in enrollment in the school, we considered all schools that experienced a percent change between -5.0 percent and +5.0 percent as one that experienced no change. Schools that had a percent change greater than 5.0 percent were categorized as experiencing either a decrease or increase. Second, a school that had no social workers last year (and therefore no ratio) but gained a social worker this year (either full-time or part-time) was categorized as a school with a decreased ratio of greater than 5.0 percent. Conversely, a school that has no social workers this year but had some coverage last year was categorized as a school with an increased ratio of greater than 5.0 percent. Schools that had no social workers both years were categorized separately and 12 schools that did not have data for both years were dropped from the analysis. For analyses by program type, only those schools in the programs both years were included. There were a total of 1,579 schools for the year to year comparisons.

Generally, schools have the same number of FTE social workers this year as they did last year; 9.5 percent of all schools saw an increase in social workers and 8.2 percent saw a decline. A larger portion of that increase was due to an increase in FTE part-time social workers. More Single Shepherd schools saw a decrease in social workers than an increase. Bridging the Gap, High Needs, and School Response Clinician schools had a larger share of schools that had an increase in total FTE social workers than a decrease. Even with variations in the total number of social workers across schools and years, a majority

of schools with one of these four programs had student to social worker ratios that either remained within a +/- 5.0 percent band or saw a decrease by more than 5.0 percent in 2020-2021 compared with 2019-2020.



A Greater Share of Schools Experienced a Decrease Rather Than an Increase of More Than 5 Percent in Student to Social Worker Ratios From Last Year to This Year

