

CITY OF NEW YORK
**THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Report on the Transportation of Disabled Public School Students by Ambulance

Copies of the report are available after 10:00 a.m., at 80 Maiden Lane, 20th Floor.

In a report released today, Special Commissioner of Investigation Richard J. Condon detailed the findings of an investigation into drivers and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) who transport disabled New York City public school children by ambulance. The investigation began in March 2004 when this office self-initiated an investigation to review the DOE's ambulance contract. Based on information from a confidential source, the investigation focused on TransCare New York, Inc. (TransCare) and discovered that the company's employees who service the DOE were not certified and had not been subjected to thorough background checks. Further review revealed that some of TransCare's drivers and EMTs had criminal records. Although New York State law does not distinguish between ambulance drivers and yellow school bus drivers who transport children, investigators learned that the DOE made a distinction between the two types of drivers. Officials from the two DOE offices involved in the certification process each maintained that the other office held primary responsibility. Consequently, no one at the DOE monitored ambulance employees assigned to service public school students.

The findings include:

- 25 of the 360 employees identified by TransCare as servicing the DOE between January and June 2004 had criminal records ranging from manslaughter, assault, and weapons possession to driving while under the influence of alcohol and drug use.
- Although the DOE contract and the New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law have strict requirements about certification, these provisions were not enforced. The Office of Pupil Transportation and the Office of Purchasing Management each maintained that the other was responsible for monitoring ambulance employees.
- Because no one at the DOE took responsibility for ambulance workers, these drivers also were not randomly tested for drug use.
- In addition to using non-certified drivers, TransCare also failed to adhere to other requirements of the New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law.
- Although a criminal history check was not conducted, a cursory review of other ambulance companies under DOE contract revealed that non-certified drivers were transporting students.

MORE ?

Upon learning about the problems with TransCare which potentially placed students at risk, the Special Commissioner notified the DOE and officials there vowed to take action. Although changes are being made, the investigation found that the DOE continues to use drivers and EMTs who are not certified.

Special Commissioner Condon recommended to the Chancellor that TransCare be barred from doing business with the DOE. In addition, he urged the DOE to give specific responsibilities to specific offices and to hold those assigned accountable.

The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation is part of the New York City Department of Investigation and the Special Commissioner reports to Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn.

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