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## Auditors call for hiring to curtail jails' overtime costs

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Erie County auditors say the Sheriff's Office needs to hire 67 more deputies and correction officers to curtail overtime costs in the county jails that they say have risen in recent years at an "unsustainable rate."

A report released this morning by County Comptroller Mark C. Poloncarz warns that new posts mandated at the Holding Center and the Correctional Facility by the state's Commission on Corrections and the federal Department of Justice have dramatically increased overtime in recent years.

"Over the past several years, overtime costs within the jail management division of the Sheriff's Office have skyrocketed," Poloncarz said during a news conference this morning. "And without taking any action going forward, they will continue to skyrocket at an unsustainable rate."

As a result, auditors found, nearly a third of the total pay for deputies and corrections officers in the Division of Jail Management went toward overtime in 2010. That year, the county spent more than \$10.8 million on overtime within the division.

"We can't control the number of posts," Poloncarz said. "But what we can control is how we man them."

The report estimates that hiring 50 new deputies and 17 new corrections officers would save the county more than \$2.9 million during the next five years.

The auditors, however, stopped short of recommending that the county hire enough deputies and corrections officers to cut all overtime within the division.

To eliminate all overtime, the report says, the county would have to hire 109 new deputies and corrections officers — the cost of which would be "prohibitively high" and

would "far exceed any savings derived from the elimination of overtime."

"It gets to a point where if you bring in so many people, it's no longer cost-effective," Poloncarz said.

The comptroller's report was done at the request of the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority. The control board asked county auditors in the spring to review overtime within Erie County.

Auditors focused on overtime within the Division of Jail Management for the period of January 2007 to June 2011 to produce the report. That division, they said, had the most overtime compared to other county departments.