

State clinic faces cutback

By ELAINE HESS

If the budget cut for the State Department for Mental Hygiene for next year goes through, the South Beach Psychiatric Center will suffer two major setbacks, according to its overall director, Dr. Alvin M. Mesnikoff.

The South Beach Psychiatric Center, under construction for more than a year in the Ocean Breeze section, will not open. The \$30-million facility, with 700 beds, is scheduled for completion either late this year or early 1972.

The programs going on for two years for South Shore residents in need of mental help will be put in a financial bind.

The possible cut comes at a time when "Staten Island is on the verge of adequate mental health services," Dr. Mesnikoff said.

This is being done by combining the independent North Shore area group, the North Richmond Mental Health So-

ciety, with the two-fold South Beach Psychiatric complex, consisting of the South Shore program and the new center under construction. Once in full swing, the center will back up the North Richmond Mental Health Society and also serve North Shore residents when necessary.

FUND FAILURE

However, Dr. Mesnikoff charged, "If the cut is not restored, the physicians proposed to staff the center will not be available and the facility will not be able to be used."

In addition, he contended that "failure to fund the Department of Mental Hygiene budget would mean that the South Shore area would have markedly inadequate resources for the coming year."

Dr. Lawrence Eisenstein, director of the South Shore program, headquartered at 51 Stuyvesant Pl., St. George, specified that the cut would have an adverse effect on the develop-

ment of present services, would cut the medical health staff by 10 per cent and would stop all travel money, overtime money and equipment money.

The proposed cut amounts to \$49.6 million, as submitted by the Assembly Ways and Means Committee. Mental Hygiene Commissioner Alan Miller said that the cut would have a disastrous effect on the institutions for the mentally ill and the mentally retarded.

Dr. Mesnikoff said the funds are needed for this year to carry out the preparation necessary for the center's opening.

He said that since the South Shore program has been in operation, the number of Staten

Islanders admitted to Manhattan State Hospital has been reduced "by more than 50 per cent over the past number of months," dropping from 75 to 30.

By developing a comprehensive mental health program as planned, Dr. Mesnikoff said hospitalization will be shortened at Manhattan State and costly treatment at Bellevue Hospital will be reduced.

He also mentioned that the new center will have a large payroll to be recirculated largely from Staten Island in the next two years.

Dr. Mesnikoff has written to state assemblymen advising against the cut. He has joined Dr. Miller and Dr. Jack Hammon, borough state school director, to protest the drastic effects the cut would have.

Opposition to the appropriation reduction should be in the hands of state legislators by next Friday, it was reported.

It was also revealed that the benevolent Society of the Retarded Children had raised a \$2,000 fund to be used in protesting the proposed budget cut.