

Center to get city \$\$? Issue still up in the air

By REGINALD PATRICK

The city Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation has acknowledged reception of a complete fiscal report on Staten Island Hospital's psychiatric outpatient clinic, but the question of whether municipal money is forthcoming for the financially troubled unit is far from being resolved.

"In dealing with bureaucrats one has to be led slowly by the hand," Michael A. Cervantes, fiscal director at the hospital, remarked yesterday.

In an attempt to obtain funding for the clinic, which is currently operating at a yearly deficit of about \$100,000, a report on the unit's finances was submitted to the city at the end of February.

Cervantes said yesterday that he waited until the middle of last week for a reply from Paul J. Cooper, regional director of Brooklyn and Staten Island for

the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

Cooper indicated in a letter that the appropriate departments were "reviewing the hospital's report." He added that when the review is completed he will meet with hospital officials. No specific dates were mentioned in the latter nor commitments given Cervantes said.

"I can't say it looks likely we'll get any money," Cervantes said. "We could use something like \$100,000 a year just to keep our heads above water, but at the present time the Department of Mental Health is trying to cut back on spending."

While the fate of the clinic hangs in the balance a number of patients who receive therapy at the facility have called the Advance to express misgivings over the closing of the unit.

Many have indicated they will not seek further therapy at either the South Beach Psychiatric Center or the North Richmond Mental Health Center in West Brighton if the clinic's doors close.

A constant complaint by most callers was that they felt the staffs of both facilities were "uncommitted," and or "unqualified."

One Stapleton woman said "they've got these young kids at South Beach Psychiatric Center fresh out of college, and I feel I can't relate to them."

"It would be like talking to my own kids," she confided, "All these kids know is what they read in a book."

A Rosebank woman said the "so-called therapist in the other places just perform their jobs and nothing more. I don't feel

they're really concerned about the patients."

She also complained that she felt the other facilities relied too much on "group therapy" instead "individual therapy." Other callers complained that the South Beach and North Richmond units did not afford the kind of confidentiality and "one-on-one" situation that Staten Island Hospital's clinic offered.

The closing of the clinic has been threatened since November.

The clinic, which was officially licensed by the state in 1971, averages about 3,000 visits a year. Based upon federal, city and Blue Cross reimbursement formulas its yearly deficit since 1972 has averaged out to about \$100,000.