

Pilferage of drugs at center probed

The district attorney's office has quietly launched an investigation into allegations of possible drug pilferage at Willowbrook Developmental Center.

The investigation was ordered following published reports that \$2.4 million worth of

drugs are stolen each year from Mental Hygiene Department facilities throughout the

state, including, presumably, Willowbrook.

The allegations of drug pilferage are contained in a series of copyrighted stories published in the Albany Times Union. The series is critical of the Mental Hygiene Department.

While one of the stories deals with allegations of employee drunkenness, unsanitary conditions and lack of medical care at Willowbrook, Chief Assistant District Attorney Thomas R. Sullivan said his office's investigation is restricted to the drug pilferage allegation.

Donald Fleming, deputy

director for institutional administration at Willowbrook had denied that the institution is troubled by a drug theft problem.

The Albany newspaper said the department has an annual drug budget of about \$8 million and that pilferage averages about 30 per cent of inventories annually.

The newspaper said department employees regard drugs as a "fringe benefit," and take it for their personal use.

Police are not called to investigate the thefts because "it's not an organized thing," the newspaper quoted a source as saying.