

# Budget cuts could threaten Willowbrook release plan

By SYDNEY FREEDBERG

Hundreds of programs across New York State that aid the handicapped, including two on Staten Island, are bracing themselves for severe service reductions following a round of budget cuts imposed by a state agency June 1.

The directors of the two non-profit organizations here receiving funds from the state Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) said yesterday their day workshops for the handicapped will be cut back drastically if the state Legislature fails to restore a 30 per cent slash in their operating budgets.

The directors of the two groups — Staten Island Aid for Retarded Children and the United Cerebral Palsy's Staten Island center — predicted the contemplated and imposed reductions jeopardize the amount, quality and scope of day care now given to some 120 developmentally disabled Islanders.

The entire handicapped community, according to the directors, will feel the impact of the cuts. But, they said, OVR-funded mental retardation facilities will be hit the hardest.

Howard Berger, director of operations for the state rehabilitation office, said hundreds of OVR-funded agencies statewide have been informed of the following cutbacks:

☐ A 15 per cent across-the-board reduction in case service payments to all OVR-sponsored agencies serving the developmentally as well as physically handicapped — effective June 1.

☐ Beginning Oct. 1, a permanent 10 per cent reduction in case service payments for programs aiding mentally retarded clients.

In addition, Berger said, Staten Island Aid's workshop at 550 Bay St., Stapleton, and the palsy group's program at 296 Richmond Ave., Port Richmond, are among the facilities to sustain the following:

☐ A 29 per cent cut in OVR staffing grants that could result in a reduction of professional workers at the affected facilities.

☐ A reduction of so-called sheltered

employment support from \$1,000 a client a year to \$840. This means less money to mentally retarded persons able to undertake job responsibilities.

☐ A reduction of OVR-funded voca-

tional evaluation from seven weeks of paid evaluation to five weeks.

☐ A reduction of OVR-funded adjust-

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James Fasciani, an instructor at Staten Island Aid for Retarded Children's Stapleton workshop, teaches a client how to assemble a pen as part of a state-funded training program endangered by budget cuts.

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