

Willowbrook audit to assess effect of court-ordered change

The state comptroller's office is conducting a comprehensive audit of the Staten Island Developmental Center for the first time since 1973, the Advance has learned.

The audit is expected to provide the first detailed look at the effect of \$336 million state officials say has been spent on court-mandated improvements for more than 5,000 current and former residents of the Willowbrook institution since 1972.

The Advance reported last May that no audit had been conducted at the center since 1973, even though the state had dramatically increased allocations to the center as a result of federal court orders. At the time, state officials said only a portion of court-mandated funds had been wasted, although they conceded no audit was available to verify their contention.

Atanas Kobryn, business officer at the center, confirmed that four auditors from the state comptroller's office have

been poring through the institution's books since September.

He said they have been examining the finances for a wide range of programs at the institution for the retarded.

Walter Homes, a spokesman for outgoing Comptroller Arthur Levitt, declined comment on the audit.

He said he only can discuss audits already completed by the comptroller's staff. Levitt will be replaced by Bronx Borough President Robert Abrams Jan. 1.

Officials of the Island center said they do not know when the audit will be completed.

The 1973 audit, a follow-up to a 1970 comptroller's report, charged that the institution's system of fiscal controls were inadequate, although not as bad as in 1970. The 1970 audit severely criticized the center, saying thousands of dollars of state funds intended for resident care was being wasted.

—BRUCE ALPERT