

# Willowbrook adds 200 workers

## in effort to meet court order

State officials, threatened with a contempt of court citation by a federal court judge, said yesterday they have added more than 200 employees to living units at the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

James Shea, a deputy director of the 2,150-bed center, said 70 more workers will be hired in the next month, increasing the institution's work force to nearly 3,700. Shea said the hirings began Nov. 1.

The 270 new workers will bring staffing at the center for the retarded up to court-mandated levels, according to Jennifer Howse, an associate commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Brooklyn Federal Court Judge John R. Bartels, in a Sept. 29 decision, gave

the state until Jan. 30 to increase staffing in the institution's state-run buildings to minimum levels required under a 1975 consent decree. If state officials failed to comply, Bartels said they would face possible contempt citations.

The judge named Gov. Carey, Mental Retardation Commissioner Thomas A. Coughlin and the institution's director, Elin M. Howe, as officials responsible for meeting terms of his order.

The Willowbrook Review Panel, a court monitor, will conduct an audit beginning Jan. 30 to determine if the state has complied with the required staffing levels, according to Katherine Schaninger, the panel's executive director.

Ms. Schaninger declined to say if the institution still would be understaffed with the additional workers, adding that

such a determination will be made in next year's audit.

Gov. Carey, during an October visit to the center, gave the go ahead for more employees although he contended they were not necessary for humane care of the institution's residents. Carey said increased hiring would cost the state more than \$300,000 a year.

State officials, in a recent report, estimated the cost of court-ordered improvements for more than 5,000 former and current center residents at \$336 million.

Attorneys representing parents of center residents told Bartels that additional employees were needed to ensure adequate care and six hours of programming a day for the handicapped persons living at the institution.