

Felton King, who heads the Civil Service Employees Union's Willowbrook unit, feels the new program will improve the relationship among parents, residents, management, and workers. "Management has never before addressed the problems of many workers," King said.

"We feel with this program many potential problems can be nipped in the bud," he said.

King cited the high rate of turnover at the state center, and said that with the new program, "maybe we can find out what's the problem, why workers leave."

Mrs. Mathews said that results thus far "have been very good." "People are really glad to find that some agency can help them," she said.

The employee assistance program is currently being used at a number of state psychiatric and developmental centers where large numbers of workers are employed. The center is the second largest employer on Staten Island.

State officials said the program in no way limits the state's ability to fire or censure an employee who does not perform satisfactorily. The officials, however, point out that under current regulations it is often difficult to dismiss a worker and a better approach is to get him help for his problems.

"It has worked in private industry, so we're hoping it can work here," one official said.

—ROBERT MIRALDI

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