

2 Island centers may be affected by state cuts in mental health jobs

By DANIEL JANISON

While state budget officials continued to haggle over where 3,000 job cuts ordered by the Carey Administration will fall, mental health officials said yesterday that both the Staten Island Developmental Center and the South Beach Psychiatric Center could be affected.

No job categories are immune from the governor's order on Monday to slash 400 positions by attrition in the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, which administers the developmental center, according to William Knowlton, an agency spokesman.

Meanwhile, 700 jobs are in jeopardy at the state Office of Mental Health, which administers South Beach. Patricia Oulton, deputy director of the facility, said that previous cuts have come from supporting services. She said she could not predict what would happen after budget talks are completed.

Details of the talks may not be available for at least a week, officials said.

Aside from the two agencies, the departments expected to be hardest hit are the State University and the Transportation Department. The cuts are intended to save the state \$21 million in the current fiscal year and about \$70 million in the next fiscal year, which begins April 1.

Knowlton said that cuts at the developmental center would "not be a significant number," but he declined to rule out the possibility of eliminating jobs in "direct services," which include at least 1,000 therapy-aide positions.

Felton King, head of the center's chapter of the Civil Service Employees Association, which claims representation for 3,000 center workers, noted that

jobs have already been eliminated through attrition. There is also a hiring freeze at the center, King said.

Meanwhile, Elin M. Howe, the center's director, said that the institution, which now houses about 1,400 handicapped people, would seek to maintain staffing levels called for under a 1975 federal court order. While the state continues to empty the center for the retarded, sending all but 250 residents to community facilities by 1981, jobs are being phased out anyway, Ms. Howe said.

"It's not anyone's intent to put us in jeopardy with the court order," she said of Gov. Carey's attrition order.

In addition, Ms. Oulton of South Beach said she received assurance in Albany two weeks ago that any cuts would not affect South Beach's ability to handle 1,100 new outpatients.

The outpatients were added to South Beach's Kingsborough unit in Brooklyn because of the closing of Kings County Hospital's psychiatric centers. State workers were hired recently to accommodate the patients.

While Ms. Oulton said this did not make South Beach immune to loss of staff through attrition, she said expansion to accommodate new programs has already been made difficult by a hiring freeze imposed last month.