

# \$\$ cuts eliminate summer camps for retarded kids

By ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS

A \$7.8-million loss in anticipated state funding has led mental retardation officials to suspend summer camp programs for 475 developmentally disabled youngsters on Staten Island, as well as for youngsters associated with 19 developmental centers in other parts of the state.

The summer camps apparently are the first program to be sacrificed, although additional mental retardation services may feel the budget pinch, according to Cora Hoffman, an assistant to the commissioner of the Office for Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

Camps affected include three state-run rural residential settings located in the Catskills, Wilton and West Seneca, and a variety of day-camp arrangements. The program caters to developmentally disabled people 20 years old or younger.

"We've always felt the program was very important," Ms. Hoffman said. "It gives parents relief they need and allows staff to take vacations."

In past years, she said, summer camps have been funded from a portion of the mental retardation allocations earmarked "Other Than Personal Services" (OTPS). Food, fuel, equipment and other institutional supplies also are purchased with OTPS funds, she noted. By cutting \$1.3 million in OTPS funds from the state's 1980-81 budget for mental retardation, Ms. Hoffman said, the Legislature made the summer camps impossible to underwrite.

OMRDD had requested — and Gov. Carey had proposed — a total \$67.23 million for OTPS in the current fiscal year. The agency also had counted on approval by the Legislature last January of \$6.5 million to cover deficiency spending. None of the deficiency request, however, was approved.

Mental retardation officials are hoping to see the Legislature restore lost funds, amounting to \$7.8 million, when the state's supplemental budget is passed in June or July.

On Staten Island, the state provided \$99,290 to privately run summer camps for the retarded in 1979-80, according to William F. Murray, assistant director of OMRDD budget services. The camps were attended by 262 residents of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, and 213 developmentally disabled persons living elsewhere in the borough, he said. Eight more Staten Island residents attended the state program in the Catskills. All these camps will be closed for the summer.

Elin M. Howe, director of the Willowbrook center, said yesterday she had not heard officially of the summer camp closings.

"It's a program I think our clients have very much enjoyed," Miss Howe said. She noted that the center would "try to arrange alternative summer activities on the grounds."

The institution offers "respite services" to families caring for the retarded in the community. But the services, up to 30 days' housing in the developmental center, are "booked through the summer," Miss Howe said.