

Willowbrook staff sickout continues

A "sickout" at the Staten Island Developmental Center continued yesterday with approximately one out of four workers calling in sick for the evening shifts.

The sickout, which is expected to continue today for the fourth consecutive day, is apparently in protest of what members of the center's union say is a serious shortage of staffing to care for the Willowbrook institution's 1,100 residents.

Elin Howe, director of the center, said that the absentee rate for the evening shift last night was slightly lower than the previous two nights. Approximately 111 called in sick Thursday, 92 on Friday and 71 last night.

"The sickout appears to be continuing," Ms. Howe said. "But we've managed to provide minimum coverage in all of our buildings."

The absentee rate has been hovering at about 20 to 25 percent, twice the norm for this time of year, according to center administrators. The highest absenteeism has been reported for night shifts.

On Friday, Felton King, president of Local 149 of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) issued a list of five demands. Among them was a call for the return of about 160 former direct care employees, who, according to King, have been given administrative assignments by the center's directors.

Ms. Howe said last night that she has not yet received a list of demands from the union, but said she and other center administrators were ready to discuss the employee concerns to bring about a quick end to the job action.

The state-run center is under a federal court order to virtually empty the facility by May 1981. But King has charged that employees have been transferred to other facilities at a considerably higher rate than residents.