

Willowbrook protest enters its 5th day

Entering their fifth day of protest, Staten Island Developmental Center workers today continued their sit-in in the lobby of the facility's administration building.

The protest, which began Thursday, was triggered when center officials withheld money from the checks of members of Local 429 of the Civil Service Employees Association, who allegedly partook in a sickout in late July.

James Walsh, a center administrator, said the demonstration has not affected services for the center's 1,100 mentally retarded residents. Union members not participating in the demonstration continue to work, he said.

The demonstration, which at its height drew about 100 employees,

had dwindled to between 10 and 20 employees yesterday, said Walsh.

According to Jeri Bell, public relations chairman for Local 429, union members are performing duties and protesting between shifts. There are varying numbers of protesters for different shifts, she said.

The sickout stemmed from the union's complaint that staffing patterns repeatedly have violated court-ordered guidelines for the institution.

Administration officials withheld the pay of 371 of 800 employees who called in sick during the four-day period.

Officials required proof that the employees who called in sick actually had been ill, Walsh said. Employees who did not provide the documentation were docked pay, Walsh said.

Last Saturday, administration officials promised the release of 36 additional checks. According to Ms. Bell, eight checks were distributed yesterday. The remaining checks are in the building.