

Study: Willowbrook workers need retraining for other jobs

By BRUCE ALPERT

The state will be unable to find jobs for employees remaining at the Staten Island Developmental Center unless it starts a massive training program to prepare them to work at community facilities.

That was one of the findings of a state-funded report by a Queens College professor on the effects of deinstitutionalization on the Willowbrook center for the retarded. The center is slowly being phased out under the provisions of a 1975 court decree.

According to Dr. Martin D. Hanlon, the report's author, most of the 2,400 direct care employees remaining at the institution live either on Staten Island or New Jersey. Therefore, Hanlon said, most will be unwilling to accept transfer to state institutions in other boroughs.

"It is our belief that without a comprehensive program for retraining and placing Staten Island Deve-

lopmental Center staff in community settings, widescale layoffs at the facility are inevitable," Hanlon said in his 56-page report.

The report was presented yesterday at a symposium at the City University graduate center in Manhattan.

Among Hanlon's other findings are the following:

¶ Staten Island Developmental Center employees who have transferred to other facilities find that they are often considered incompetent or unable to do their jobs because of the reports of poor patient care at the institution over the past 10 years. "We find that the stigma of Willowbrook does live on," Hanlon said.

¶ Most employees who transferred from Staten Island Developmental Center found that training and education programs at the Willowbrook institution were stronger than their new work place.

¶ Some transferred workers indi-

cated that they had more "freedom" at the Island center than their new work place. "Some admitted that it was easier to show up late for work at Willowbrook, but to others it meant that the direct care workers had more opportunities to make decisions of responsibility without having to consult a supervisor," Hanlon said.

The study, which cost \$9,050, was funded by the state Office of Employee Relations. The studies are mandated under a collective bargaining agreement reached last year between the state and the 108,000-member Civil Service Employees Association.

The studies funded under the agreement are supposed to assist the state in developing programs for employees affected by the state's shift from large institutions to smaller community residences for the mentally retarded and mentally ill.