

Job program for retarded trying new procedure

By RUTH SHEREFF

Job Path, a program that prepares mentally retarded adults in Staten Island and Manhattan to work in the open job market, has started using a debated selection procedure under a \$250,000 study grant funded by the Ford Foundation and the federal government.

Since Oct. 1, all qualified applicants in the 18-24 age bracket are being accepted or rejected on a computerized chance basis. Those who are rejected will not receive the services of the agency for three years.

Their progress in daily life and working situations will be compared to that of Job Path trainees.

Fredda Rosen, director of the Job Path Staten Island office, St. George, said the study was necessary to prove the program's effectiveness for future funding and to pave the way for similar programs around the country to receive funding as well.

Speaking at the monthly meeting of the Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council, Ms. Rosen faced sharp criticism from the parents of retarded children and heads of other service agencies who participate in the council, an advisory group. The meeting was in the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

An official position has not yet been taken by the council, however, and many members

praised the Job Path program and said it was one they would not like to lose.

Dr. Gerald Spielman, director of the Staten Island Center for Developmental Disabilities, objected, as did others, to the use of the control group. "It is inappropriate," he said, for people screened by referral agencies to be sent to Job Path, where they will apply only to be told they were selected for a control group that will not receive aid.

"I will no longer refer people to the program," he said, because of what he called "ethical" considerations.

Parents and the developmentally disabled young person will be told about the study when they apply, Ms. Rosen said. She said most referral agencies knew about it as well.

Sally Hillsman of the Vera Institute for Justice, Manhattan, maintained the control group was necessary for an accurate study that would be accepted by funding agencies and legislators. The Vera Institute is the parent agency of Job Path.

Job Path finds jobs for retarded adults such as messenger, parking lot attendant and janitor. It provides on-the-job counseling and training for the trainees and provides subsidies to employers, many of whom later hire the trainee permanently.

Among the Staten Island businesses that have participated are Anguill Buick, Citibank, Pouch

Terminal and Staten Island Hospital.

The grant was made through the Structured Training Employment Transitional Services demonstration project of the Manpower Demonstration Research Corp., Manhattan, which is a non-profit organization funded by the Ford Foundation and the federal government.

According to Ms. Rosen, the study grant saved 22 trainee slots in the Staten Island Job Path office and 28 slots in the

Manhattan office that were faced by funding cutbacks. As a result, the agency will function during the program year that started Oct. 1 at last year's level of 41 trainee slots on Staten Island and 160 citywide.

Even before the agency knew of the funding cutbacks, it was negotiating the grant, said Emily Marks, associate director of the Vera Institute, because "we believe in this kind of research."

The study affects all applicants aged 18 to 24, with an IQ of 40 to 80. To qualify for Job Path, a person must be capable of employment, but not quite able to go about getting and keeping a job on their own. People older than 24, said Ms. Rosen, will continue participation as before.

In other business, it was announced that the Staten Island office of the Early Childhood Direction Center, has been disbanded by the New York State Education Department.

The task of screening children under age 5 for potential learning and developing disabilities and referring the parents to agencies for help has been transferred to the Brooklyn office.

Marian Corbett, a director of the Brooklyn office, said two people from the Brooklyn office would spend one day a week on Staten Island, The Staten Island office had one full-time and three part-time workers.

"Everybody is very upset about this," said Beatrice Victor, chairwoman of the regional council, because follow-up will suffer.

The group also made plans for a showing of "Best Boy," an Academy Award winning film about a developmentally disabled young man who found an independent way of life in a group home. Tickets for the screening Nov. 20 at 7 p.m. in Wagner College cost \$15 and can be purchased through the council in care of Katherine Mahoney, 1150 Castleton Ave., Staten Island, N.Y. 10310.