

500 layoffs still ahead, chief warns

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ALBANY — Layoffs at the Staten Island Developmental Center are likely next spring unless employees voluntarily accept jobs at retardation facilities in other boroughs, a key adviser to Gov. Carey said yesterday.

James E. Introne, the state's former mental retardation commissioner who recently was named Carey's chief of operations, said 500 layoffs predicted for the current fiscal year have been averted largely because the placement of center residents into group homes has lagged behind projections.

"We'll do all we can, but layoffs are a real possibility in the 1982-83 fiscal year and even at the end of this fiscal year unless we get the cooperation of workers as far as transfers to other facilities are concerned," Introne told the Advance in an interview. The 1982-83 fiscal year begins April 1.

Introne noted that the state next week will seek authorization in U.S. District Court, Brooklyn, to transfer center residents into larger community

residences, than permitted in a 1975 court decree mandating the virtual emptying of the Willowbrook institution. If the state is allowed to place residents in 10- and 20-bed facilities, the center's population, now at 790 should decline rapidly, state officials said.

"At some point, it is clear that we're going to have too many employees for the remaining residents," Introne said.

Dr. Ella Curry, director of the developmental center, said that several hundred employees have voluntarily transferred to mental retardation facilities in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

But she said it is difficult for many of the center's 2,600 employees to transfer because they live on either Staten Island or New Jersey and face a long trip, often on unreliable public transportation, to state facilities in the Bronx, Manhattan, or Brooklyn.

Dr. Curry said she is hopeful that a state decision to train some of the center's 1,200 direct-care workers to perform occupational and physical therapy will help them find jobs at group homes on the Island.

Initially, the state had not planned to include the Island developmental center in the \$400,000 program funded by grants from the federal government, state and Civil Service Employees Association, which represents many of the institution's workers. But Dr. Curry said the state has reversed itself and plans an organizational meeting on Dec. 29.