

# Willowbrook faces additional layoffs from the legislature

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ALBANY — A plan by legislative leaders to cut appropriations to mental health and mental retardation programs might force additional layoffs at the Staten Island Developmental Center, aides to Gov. Carey said yesterday.

The aides were responding to reports that legislative leaders were prepared to cut \$50 million from Gov. Carey's agency budget requests, the bulk from the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and the Office of Mental Health.

Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, the governor's health adviser, said additional cuts would force some facilities below federal staffing requirements, thereby threatening a loss of Medicaid funds.

The Willowbrook center is slated to lose 1,119 employees — about half its work force — under the governor's proposal and Sachs said additional cuts might be required if the legislative leaders reduced appropriations to mental retardation programs. But he said the Carey administration would not allow the center, which is scheduled to lose all but 450 of its residents during the next budget year, to drop below staffing standards set by a 1975 court decree.

"We will have to steal from other institutions to keep staffing levels at Willowbrook up to consent decree levels," Sachs said. "We don't want to be held in contempt of court."

The state is already facing

charges by parent groups that it is violating the consent decree guidelines on clothing, education and overcrowding. U.S. District Court Judge John R. Bartels is expected to rule on the charges in the next few months.

The consent decree was signed by Carey in 1975 in an out-of-court settlement with parents groups critical of conditions in the institution for the retarded.

Carey, at an Albany press conference, said that lawmakers would be making a mistake if they tried to gain money for education by cutting mental health programs. The governor has proposed a one-cent hike in the sales tax to fund education, but it has been rejected by Senate Republicans.

"I won't fund education at the expense of mental hygiene," said Carey, who warns he might veto appropriations he feels would put the state budget out of balance.

The governor said cuts in mental hygiene programs would force additional layoffs and the closing of several mental health institutions.

But Gerald McLaughlin, spokesman for Senate Finance Committee Chairman John J. Marchi, R-Ward Hill, said the governor tends to deal "in his-tronics" at budget time. He said negotiators for the Republican-led Senate and Democratic-controlled Assembly were making progress toward a budget agreement.

The state's new budget is due to take effect on April 1. Marathon negotiations were continuing last night.