

Center to lay off 60 more workers

By **BRUCE ALPERT**

About 60 employees at the Staten Island Developmental Center, spared layoffs in September because of an administrative snafu, will be removed from the center's payroll on Dec. 8, according to center officials.

And a new round of layoffs, affecting as many as 240 workers at the Willowbrook center for the retarded, is likely in February or March, the officials said.

The 60 workers escaped layoffs in September, according to a spokesman for the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, because the state made a mistake in determining seniority. Under civil service regulations, employees with the least seniority are the first to be fired.

The spokesman said a revised seniority list has been prepared — paving the way for the layoffs to move forward.

About 38 of the 60 workers will be given jobs at developmental centers in other boroughs, according to James Walsh, Staten Island Developmental Center's deputy director.

Walsh said the new

round of layoffs scheduled for February and March result from a state budget directive requiring the center to reduce its direct-care staff from 2,040 to 1,800 by March 31 — the end of the state fiscal year.

Walsh said the 240 workers affected by the directive will also be able to replace employees at other developmental centers with less seniority.

But officials with the Civil Service Employees Association say many of the workers, especially those who live on Staten Island or in New Jersey, would find it difficult to get to jobs in other boroughs.

The union officials note that the direct-care workers, most of

whom are classified as therapy aides, are among the lowest paid in the state system.

The reductions in Staten Island Developmental Center's staff results from the reduction in its patient census, Walsh said.

The center, which housed more than 5,000 residents in 1972, now has 827. The latest projections, Walsh said, assume that the center will lose 52 clients between now and April 1.

"The state is committed to maintaining over 2.3 staff for every client," said Walsh, adding that if transfers out of Willowbrook fall short of expectations the number of staff reductions will be cut.