

---

# *Layoffs a 'living hell' for families facing threat*

By BRUCE ALPERT  
Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Daniel Dunn, an associate psychologist at the South Beach Psychiatric Center, says he and co-workers have been working "in a living hell" the last few weeks.

Dunn is among the thousands of state employees awaiting word on whether they are to lose their jobs, be transferred to other facilities or be demoted as the state's reduces its work force.

Their job status awaits the last-minute negotiations between Gov Mario M. Cuomo and legislative leaders. Of the 7,587 scheduled to be laid off on April 7, it now appears only about 2,000 will lose their jobs. Many of the 71 layoffs scheduled at South Beach

are also expected to averted.

But for some, the scars of the last few weeks are likely to remain for many years.

Twelve times in recent weeks, Dunn said, he has had appointments with South Beach's personnel office cancelled. When he finally got to see a personnel officer, Dunn, 31, of Brooklyn, was given "30 seconds" to decide whether to transfer to Creedmore Psychiatric Center (Queens) or Bronx Psychiatric Center.

"It's impossible to describe the feelings I and other workers had being called down for appointment after appointment and being told to come back because 'we don't know what your situation will be,' " Dunn said.

Dunn notes that he and his wife are concerned that they might not be able to meet the payments on their Brooklyn home and new car. "Everything seemed set for us and now we wonder about my possibly losing my job," he said.

But the associate psychologist said he has even more concerns for his patients, all of whom are residents of Staten Island's South Shore. He conceded that some services were substantially reduced in recent weeks as employees either awaited meetings with personnel officers about their job status or began looking elsewhere for work.

"There is no other place for them," he said. "When they ar-

(See LAYOFFS, Page A 4)

Page 1 of 2 pages

# Layoffs

(From Page 1)

rive at a state hospital, it's the end of the road.

"And we know even if our jobs are retained, things aren't likely to get that much better here," Dunn said. "And we desperately need new services. Right now, we have a revolving door. We see the same patients over and over again."

Dunn and other South Beach employees say everybody at the center is talking about the layoffs and the ripple effects that result.

A spokesman for the state Department of Civil Service said that for every job eliminated, 2.5 people would change jobs. That is

due to people with more seniority bumping less senior people at other job sites.

"It makes it difficult to work when people are asking where am I going to go and when am I going," said Ken Dischel, a psychologist who works with South Beach's most violent patients. "When all the staff is talking about is this job situation, it has to make the patients feel some anxiety. They wonder what's going to happen to those who regularly treat them."

Barry Markman, who heads South Beach's Public Employees Federation chapter, said that the blame for all the confusion and uncertainty rests with the Cuomo

administration.

"They could have waited 21 days as we and legislators suggested until they knew what the Legislature was going to do," Markman said. "If they did, a lot of the pain might have been averted."

But Cuomo said sending out layoff notices was necessary so as to avert the need for more layoffs later. The later layoffs notices go out, he said, the less the savings from each job elimination.

Meanwhile, employees say the confusion at South Beach is being repeated throughout state agencies and its network of services.

At the state Health Depart-

ment, one worker was told that his position in the New York City office had been terminated, but that he could find a job in Albany. Later, he was told the only job for him would be in Syracuse. And, finally, he was told that he probably could stay in New York City.

"They are destroying people's lives," said Frederick Parker, director of the bureau of audit and analysis for the Health Department, who himself is slated to lose his job. "They should know that there is a level of abuse to which people can't go beyond. And they are coming close, very close."

Page 1 of 2 Pages