

# Center for retarded awaits checkup

By RANDY DIAMOND

A special monitoring unit will inspect the Brooklyn Developmental Center next month and report to a federal judge on the quality of care at the facility.

The results of the inspection, which comes in the wake of unfavorable reports regarding the center's administration and quality of care, will be given to the jurist who will then determine the future of the center.

The court could choose from a wide number of options including closing the center.

Director Thomas Shirtz talked proudly about his gardening and foster grandparents program and the center's dedicated staff during a prearranged tour of the southeastern Brooklyn facility late last week.

"The staff just really cares," he said.

Yet it was 10 of that same staff that auditors from State Controller Edward Regan's office found asleep during a

surprise early morning visit to the center, according to a report released two weeks ago.

Shirtz responded that the institution has 1,500 employees and there are always going to be some problems with that number of personnel.

"I used to shut my eyes myself way back when I was a patient care worker and was on the night shift," said Shirtz. "But there's a difference between actually being asleep and having your eyes closed. I don't think most of the employees the auditors found were actually asleep."

THE DIRECTOR showed off the areas where the residents sleep and they seemed to be clean, unlike what the consultants for patients rights groups had found during their inspection visit in late 1981. The residents themselves looked adequately clothed.

A federal judge in April 1982 agreed with the rights groups that a 1972 consent agreement to provide adequate care for the retarded had been violated and that conditions at the center were not up to par.

Shirtz did not deny there are problems in the facility, chiefly the layoffs of 100 employees in the last year. Staff morale is low because employees must work mandatory overtime to make up for the shortage, he said.

The director said he recently got permission to hire 30 new direct-care workers and also plans to hire some college students part-time.

THERESA RAFFERTY, executive director of the court-appointed Consumer Advisory Board which monitors conditions in institutions for the retarded, said conditions in Brooklyn are far better than they were in Willowbrook on Staten Island where the mistreatment of the retarded gained national media attention in the early 1970s.

But she said the board feels that the state has not been doing enough to build small group homes in various neighborhoods in Brooklyn where the retarded would be better off in a small-family atmosphere.

Shirtz said the state has opened 88

such homes in Brooklyn, the most in any location in the state, but that community opposition has prevented the opening of as many as the state would like.

RUDY MAGNONE, director of Delaware's mental retardation programs, was appointed as a special master by a federal judge in April 1982 when the judge ruled the state had violated the consent agreement. Magnone was given the assignment of monitoring conditions and developing a strategy to get the state into compliance with the consent agreement.

Magnone said he feels the state can do more to open up group homes for the retarded in Brooklyn and plans to announce a plan for that shortly.

Meanwhile, a monitoring team from Magnone's office is scheduled to make a complete inspection of the Brooklyn Developmental Center on Aug. 13 and 14 to see if conditions have improved any from late 1981.

Shirtz said he is confident the inspectors will like what they find.

## Mom in L.A. for sentencing

Page 3

## Quiz hobby in wife's death

Page 4