

# Developmental center won't close before 1987

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Despite Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's pledge to close the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC), top state officials say the institution will remain open for another three years.

Moreover, the officials say a court-ordered deadline to reduce SIDC's population from more than 1,000 to 250 by spring 1985 cannot be met.

In a 72-page message presented to the Legislature yesterday, Cuomo listed the closing of SIDC as a priority, but did not give a specific closing date.

However, Henrik Dullea, director of the state Office of Operations, said it would be "several years before the Staten Island Developmental Center is entirely phased out."

"Our current target date is 1987 to have no more residents at the Staten Island Developmental Center *per se*," Dullea said.

Dullea also said that the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) has been asked to map out a plan for closing the institution. The plan will be delivered to the governor "within six months if not sooner," Dullea said.

OMRDD Commissioner Arthur Y. Webb issued a statement in Albany yesterday calling the move to eventually close Willowbrook a "dramatic decision."

It was Webb's office that Cuomo ordered to submit a plan to close the center by mid-1987.

Webb said the announcement "has met with praise from parents, concerned citizens and voluntary agencies from across the state," as indicated by the number of calls being received by his office.

"Some of these individuals and organizations were involved in the original litigation that resulted in the Willowbrook Consent Decree of 1975," the statement said.

Major operational and capital savings are estimated to total more than \$40 million from the closing, he said, adding, "the closing of Willowbrook makes sense, not only from a humanitarian aspect, but from a management and fiscal standpoint on the wisest use of our public dollars."

Webb vowed to "make every effort to preserve our most critical resource — our work force."

Cuomo, according to the commissioner, "has insisted on assuring parents that the placement plan will be comprehensive, thoughtful and carefully monitored."

The future of SIDC has been the center of controversy since it was racked by scandals involving inadequate patient care in the early 1970s. Then called Willowbrook State School, it housed 6,000 patients.

In 1975, the state settled a class-action lawsuit by signing the Willowbrook Consent Decree, calling for the placement of its patients in community residences.

Under the plan, the state was