

Many serious faults cited in SIDC audit

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"Serious deficiencies" have afflicted the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, from uncontrolled drug stock and dubious supply purchases to some workers' neglect of retarded patients, according to a state audit.

"We have made many recommendations to upgrade operations at the center and to correct the many deficiencies we found," state Comptroller Edward V. Regan, whose office released the scathing audit report, said yesterday.

Among the findings were that some therapy aides left wards unattended at night, large supply orders were split to avoid competitive bidding, and excess and contaminated drugs were not disposed of properly.

The center bought fruit juice at three times the price otherwise available, according to the 21-page report.

Auditors also found that control over residents' cash was "poor"; the wording of a request for bids on a pest extermination contract was set up to the advantage of a certain bidder; the community store had "poor internal controls," and certain cases of absenteeism went unrecorded.

Many of the audit findings are more than a year old.

Managers of the developmental center, which is due under court order to reduce its patient population to 250 by next March, said in audit documents that many of the reforms suggested by Regan have been accomplished or are under way.

"Officials ... indicated they would take prompt corrective actions," Regan said.

Release of the audit follows several recent news developments affecting the center.

In January, Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's announced that the center should close entirely by 1987, marking a symbolic end to an "era of neglect" of the mentally retarded and disabled embodied in what was once the infamous Willowbrook State School.

Earlier this month, the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities took over the Karl D. Warner Center, a treatment facility on the Willowbrook grounds, from United Cerebral Palsy, which was in financial trouble.

The most shocking of the recent accounts was that of a retarded female patient who gave