

Staten Island

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Chief OKs his center on report

By MARY ENGELS

The "serious deficiencies" found by state auditors in the operation of the Staten Island Developmental Center (formerly Willowbrook) have been corrected about "90%," with the rest in the process of being corrected, according to James Walsh, director of the center.

Walsh said that the report "held no surprises and was not new.

"A lot of the things they found were corrected before their end of the year survey and indeed were in the process of being corrected before they came," Walsh said.

Walsh blamed the "time frame and time lapses between the actual audit conducted between April 1981 and October 1982 and the release of the report this week as making things appear worse than is the case."

ALTHOUGH THE director noted that "although many of the things cited were in fact true, nevertheless, steps had been taken prior to the audit to correct the deficiencies."

Walsh said that "there are regular checks by supervisors and personnel staff and anyone found sleeping on the job will be dealt with in disciplinary fashion.

"One person mentioned in the report as having been found sleeping on the job was in fact not sleeping and was found innocent by an independent arbiter."

In the area of so called repeated instances of employes leaving work early, often without signing out, and coming in late, Walsh said that "some who had signed out early had gotten permission to leave due to time they had coming and for those who hadn't signed, about 100 employes, an audit is

being done and will be corrected by our personnel office.'

AMONG THE improper purchasing practices uncovered by state auditors was the division of large orders into several smaller orders to avoid competitive bidding requirements. Walsh said that "most of it was done inadvertently due to the volume of paper work.

"We have been losing staff and when new people come in they are kind of overwhelmed initially by all the paper work involved. When any purchases were made, rather than follow up with long-term purchase, some of the employes forgot to do it and as a result

it appeared they paid more than they should have."

The director blamed all this on "lack of proper training for the newcomers, a thing that is being rectified now."

As for the accusation by auditors that thousands of dollars worth of new refrigerators, box springs and mattresses were rotting away in storage, Walsh said "not so.

"THE ONLY EXCESS we have is in case of emergency. In case of a breakdown of say a washer or dryer, if we didn't have them on hand it would take some six to eight weeks to get them for clients, leaving them without."

The director also noted that lax inventory control over prescription drugs and syringes had been dealt with and the only area left remaining to be taken care of, hopefully by next month, is "the community store, which handles supplies independent of the business office."

Walsh praised the state auditors for their work and found them "very cooperative. Unfortunately, there was a time span between their reporting system and ours. Most of the things revealed have been corrected at least 90%," he said.

The population of the center is about 776, with 1,700 full-time employes.