

New criticism hits Developmental Center

By JULIE MACK
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"Ninety-five percent" of the problems cited in an audit of Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) by the state comptroller's office have been resolved, according to the institution's director.

But James Walsh now must address a new set of deficiencies brought to light by another, more recent survey conducted by the state Health Department.

The state facility for the mentally retarded, which currently houses about 1,000 patients, made headlines earlier this week, when the comptroller's office released copies of its audit report last weekend. That report cited major problems in payroll and personnel practices, purchasing, inventory control, cash management and management of the community store.

However, because the comptroller's office conducted its study during 1981 and 1982, the observations were based on facts that were 18 months to 2½ years old. Moreover, the state Office of Mental Retardation

and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), which operates SIDC, made changes last year based on the report's findings.

The only exception was a change involving the community store's bookkeeping practices, which are scheduled for revision on April 1, the beginning of the 1984-85 fiscal year.

"The (comptroller's) audit is old. We've essentially completed clearing up these items," OMRDD Commissioner Arthur Webb said. "I think it's getting blown out of proportion."

Walsh, who was the new deputy director of institution administration when the survey was made, said he worked closely with the auditors.

"In fact, some of the issues pointed out by them were already being addressed by our staff," he said. "We were using them almost like outside consultants to make recommendations on how we could improve things."

"By the time they left, about 75 percent of the issues had already been addressed and now it's about 95 percent. The final issue will be resolved March 30,

when we implement new controls at the community store. There we had to wait until the end of the fiscal year."

Meanwhile, Walsh's attention has turned toward correcting deficiencies pointed out by the state Health Department in a survey made in December.

The 22-page report listed four areas of concern, including rehabilitation services, food services, control of pharmaceuticals and physical plant and environment.

However, a Health Department spokesman said that SIDC was "about par" with other developmental centers in the city. He hinted that two of the problems — rehabilitation services and physical plant and environment — were at least partially beyond the institution's control.

In rehabilitation services, the report said that lack of physical therapy was a chronic problem.

"While there is not a total lack of therapy services, the supply does not meet the need," Jerome Wolf, chief health care management systems analyst for the

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