

# Bill would set staffing levels

By DAN JANISON  
Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Lawmakers are set to agree on an unusual bill calling for specified staffing levels at psychiatric centers, public universities and state-run centers for the mentally retarded.

Conflict has raged for months about whether Gov. Mario M. Cuomo violated the intentions of the Legislature last year by failing to have his budget aides restore staffing levels cut to help close a \$1.8 billion budget gap.

Restorations were due but never made, elected officials say, after more older workers than expected took advantage of an early retirement bonus plan touted last year as a way to trim the payroll while minimizing layoffs.

The set staffing numbers would not be binding under the legislation being discussed.

To resolve the disagreement, which has pitted leaders of both party caucuses against the governor, the special budget measure is to be discussed behind closed doors today by Senate members and could possibly come up for a vote tomorrow in the Assembly.

It marks a new twist to the process by which the state budget for the passing fiscal year must be settled before a budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1 takes effect.

Under its terms, the administration would have to explain by March 15 why it has not met staffing goals.

Fiscal committees headed by Sen. John J. Marchi, R-Staten Island, and Assemblyman Arthur Kremer, D-Long Island, proposed that \$133.9 million in "general funds" be allocated to cover unanticipated expenses. That is \$4.4 million less than Cuomo proposed.

The staffing level for the Office of Mental Health, which runs such facilities as the South Beach Psychiatric Center, would be set at 32,110, with 1,200 deployed for children's care and 588 for research. To meet that goal, the governor would have to add 2,000 workers, according to Ed DeCosmo, a spokesman for Sen. Frank Padavan, R-Queens.

Statewide, the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities would keep a 1.78-to-one staff-to-patient ratio under the goals.

Under the recommended levels, the state university would have 32,665 employees and the city university 10,897. Both these numbers mark increases of hundreds from current levels as reported.

The potential impact on borough institutions was not immediately clear.

This budget negotiation is related but separate from one in which Cuomo the week before last proposed millions in added expenditures. The latter involves the 1984-85 budget, to begin April 1, the former the 1983-84 budget, still in effect.