

Aides to retarded face drug charges

By MARC HUMBERT

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Possible criminal charges are facing 35 employees of the state's Manhattan Developmental Center who have been relieved of duty amid allegations ranging from cocaine use and sale while on duty to patient abuse.

Arthur Webb, commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, said the action yesterday came as the result of an eight-month undercover investigation by his office.

Webb said the state would begin disciplinary proceedings against the 35 lower-level employees immediately with the intention of suspending them

without pay and firing some of the workers.

The commissioner said the findings from the investigation were being turned over to the Manhattan district attorney's office for possible criminal prosecution. None of the 35 will be identified, said Webb, pending the filing of any criminal charges.

All 35 were relieved of duty even before the disciplinary charges were filed in order to keep them out of the facility.

"The anticipated charges are such that the individuals involved are considered to be a potential threat to the safety of the institution," said a statement issued by Webb's office.