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35 WORKERS BOOTED FOR RETARDED HOME HORRORS

WIDESPREAD beatings of patients "for kicks" and drug dealing were uncovered at a state home for the mentally retarded in Greenwich Village — triggering the suspension of 35 workers yesterday.

The 35 — mostly therapy aides, cooks and maintenance workers — were escorted out of the building by guards because "they are serious threats," according to state officials.

The workers maintained a "party-like atmosphere" at the home, using cocaine daily, drinking and gambling in the institution at 75 Morton St. "whenever they pleased," said one state source.

Some of the accused workers savagely beat patients "just for kicks" — including one therapy aide who lashed a helpless retarded patient with a heavy belt with more than 60 blows, state officials said.

There were several other employees who witnessed that beating, but

By CHARLES CARILLO and PAUL THARP

didn't say anything or do anything to stop it," said Lou Ganim, a spokesman for the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Another therapy aide poked a patient in the eye with an umbrella and beat the patient, the state said.

The wholesale cleaning out of the accused rogue workers at Manhattan Developmental Center — nearly 10 percent of the staff — came as a result of an eight-month undercover probe.

All information in the investigation will be turned over to Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau for criminal proceedings.

"The investigation began after numerous complaints from visitors, families and other employees about abuse and especially drug use," said Ganim.

Private undercover in-

vestigators also discovered workers systematically looted kitchens of food and clothing.

Workers were also said to carry weapons on the job, including one who pulled out a loaded .38 pistol and threatened to shoot another employe in a dispute, Ganim said.

The undercover report said 14 of the workers were cocaine dealers and users and one was a loan-shark accused of making loans up to \$100.

There was also widespread gambling with dice and cards.

Some of the suspended workers told The Post they were taken completely by surprise at the suspensions, claiming they did nothing irregular.

Manuel Ortiz, a housekeeping supervisor who worked there for 22 years, said:

"They told me I was suspended. I didn't do nothing wrong. I don't know why this happened."

Another booted worker, Rosa Jamison, who worked there 16 years as a therapy aide, said no one told her what charges were made against her.

"They said I would be interrogated on Monday. They said I would find out then what is what. I enjoy working with the children, but the administration is terrible."

Arthur Webb, commissioner of the Office of Mental Retardation, said that because of the seriousness of the allegations, all of the people relieved of duty would be barred from the center and the agency would immediately begin taking steps to suspend the 35 without pay.

State officials said they would seek to fire the 35 employees permanently after interviewing them next week, Webb said.