

# Eye abuse in mental home

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Patient abuse, drug sales, weapons possession and other instances of misconduct were uncovered during an eight-month probe of the Manhattan Developmental Center, of which officials announced yesterday.

Thirty-five employees have been barred from the state-run psychiatric facility at 75 Morton St. in Greenwich Village, and some may be fired, the officials said. They are considered potential threats to the safety of the institution in light of the allegations, the officials said.

In one of four alleged incidents of abuse, an employee struck a patient with a belt as many as 60 times on the head

and back, according to a spokesman for the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Another employee allegedly poked a patient with an umbrella, and employees witnessed abuse but failed to report it or intervene, the spokesman said.

Fourteen employees are accused of the use, sale and distribution of cocaine among other center employees.

A loan-sharking operation also was uncovered at the facility, with one employee observed lending money at "usurers' rates," the spokesman said. Ten employees allegedly were involved with illegal gambling at the center.

OTHER departmental charges under consideration involve theft of state property, possession of a dangerous weapon and alcohol abuse while on duty, said Cominis.

Arthur Webb of the mental retardation office. The employees—food service workers, therapy aides and maintenance workers—were placed on administrative leave pending the expected filing of formal departmental charges by the end of next week, officials said. The employees were not identified.

Webb said his agency would begin disciplinary action against the 35 employees with

the intention of suspending them without pay and seeking termination if appropriate.

Evidence uncovered during the probe will be turned over to the Manhattan district attorney's office, which will be asked to pursue criminal charges against the employees, Webb said.

"WE CONSIDER this to have been an extremely serious situation involving considerable misconduct," Webb said, calling it "an unfortunate occurrence."

He added that "this agency will not tolerate the types of employe misconduct and illicit activities that this investigation has revealed."

The facility has 197 residents and 401 employees.