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# Director: SIDC better than federal report

By JULIE MACK  
Advance Staff Writer

If federal officials returned next week to Staten Island Developmental Center, they would not find many of the deficiencies they cited in February, according to SIDC director James Walsh.

"They may still find problems, but they would see that issues are being addressed," Walsh said yesterday.

His comments came in response to a critical report by the federal Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), which was detailed yesterday in the Advance. The agency's report, based on an inspection at the center Feb. 6, listed more than

125 deficiencies in quality of care for the 800 mentally retarded clients.

The problem areas included food and nutrition, pharmacy services, sanitation, inadequate clothing for patients, and infection control.

"I think the feds are getting tougher (in enforcing standards), but that's OK," Walsh said. "We're all pushing for the clients."

Among the changes Walsh says he has made in recent months is an overhaul of the food service, which was criticized in February as "constantly in a state of crisis management." In addition to a new kitchen, the food service has been reorganized with new

delineations of responsibility, Walsh said.

"Each person (in management) will be responsible for supervising a certain area, and each will have targets for improvements and dates by which those improvements must be made," he said.

"Their (federal officials) impression of our food service is one of poor organization. My feeling is that the organization is there, but because of other pressure, the supervisors didn't put enough emphasis on day-to-day operations. Now we'll have check lists and we'll get status reports to better determine how things are going."

On infection control, SIDC has now assigned a nurse to take

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cultures from different areas of the institution to ensure that germs are not being spread.

Walsh also defended the institution's pharmaceutical division, which was criticized for inadequate record-keeping and for its policies in dispensing drugs.

"It's a matter of style and opinion," he said. "They said some of our policies were outdated, but we questioned them on that. I thought we were almost in total compliance in the pharmaceutical area."

Likewise, Walsh said he disagreed that SIDC clients are not provided with enough clothing. The federal survey cited one example of patients walking around nude.

"I looked into that particular instance, and I found that happened in the early morning hours while the staff was changing the women's clothing," Walsh said. "I go through the institutions at all times of the day, and you do occasionally see people nude, but I'm satisfied that we have enough clothes for our clients."

"It's hard to have clothes on all the clients all the time," he said, adding that some clients are hyperactive and undress themselves during the day. "There will always be an issue with clothing because of the type of clients that we have."

Another issue was cleanliness, particularly in the bathrooms.

The surveyors cited several examples of clogged toilets, offensive odors and filth crusted on water fountains, toilets and bathroom walls.

"I didn't see that type of odor or problems, but I'm now having supervisors make rounds of key areas like bathrooms on a daily basis to ensure that they are clean," Walsh said.

Walsh, who took over as SIDC director in June 1983, said he had already identified many of the items cited in the federal report.

"There was almost nothing that we didn't already have a plan to correct," Walsh said.

Walsh said his reforms should start reaping results within the next year.

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