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# Staten Island

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## END OF WILLOWBROOK

By MARY ENGELS

Seven hundred employees at the Staten Island Developmental Center, formerly Willowbrook, are scheduled to be laid off this year as part of a phase-out of the center's remaining facilities, according to authorities.

Slated to go next year are 734 more employees, leaving approximately 399 in charge of the Richmond complex for the handicapped, which is currently on the state-owned property in Willowbrook.

Lou Ganim, a spokesman for the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, said, "The employee layoffs are the results of the final impact of the Willowbrook consent decree and the closing of Willowbrook as we know it."

Gov. Carey signed a consent decree in 1975 to sweepingly upgrade treatment for the retarded following a Federal Court suit brought by parents of patients at the old Willowbrook.

### More to be laid off

And in January, Gov. Cuomo pledged in his State of the State message that he would close the facility by 1987.

Ganim noted that the layoffs "will be done in three stages and will begin on May 22 with about 188 employees, followed by another 169 in September and then the rest by March of next year."

There are now 1,832 employees at the center, which has a client population of 696.

Ganim emphasized "The state will do everything it can to try and place as many people as it can. In fact, some of the numbers we are talking about will be eliminated through attrition, or through placement with other state agencies and in the private sector."

Arthur Webb, the commissioner of the state agency, said, "It is unfortunate that this kind of disruption has to occur, but we will make every effort to do everything

are minorities, and it's going to be tough for them to get jobs."

He went on, "It will be a hell of an impact on the Staten Island community, and we intend to push to see that our employees get jobs locally so they don't have to re-settle elsewhere."

Thompson, also bitter, said, "The reality is that they are getting ready to put a lot of people out of work and they may bump some to get jobs for ours. But where do those who are bumped go? They will hit the streets."

"The sad thing is what happens to these kids who are in the center. What kind of staff will they be left with and who will take care of them? Some of them are even being dumped now Upstate just to get them out of this center."

"It's one thing for politicians to make promises," he said, referring to Cuomo's pledge to close Willowbrook, "but they are not really putting these clients in normalized (proper) group homes."