

Audit advises halt to leave, benefit abuses at office

ALBANY (AP) — The state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities should stop sick leave abuses and other excessive use of employee benefits, state audits concluded yesterday.

Payroll procedures at the agency's central office in Albany as well as the West Seneca Developmental Center in Erie County and the Oswald D. Heck Developmental Center in Schenectady were reviewed by state Comptroller Edward Regan's office. Many former clients of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, have been transferred to the O.D. Heck center.

Potential employee sick leave abuses, excessive Workers' Compensation claims and inadequate controls over employee atten-

dance practices were among the major problems identified in the three audits.

Officials with the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities said they agreed with most of the audits' findings and have moved to correct the problems.

The agency for the retarded was criticized for its lack of a sick leave abuse prevention program. At the central office, the audit said five of 25 employees randomly selected often used sick leave on Mondays, Fridays or in conjunction with holidays.

At both the central office and at West Seneca, the audit said that some employees were allowed to use large amounts of sick leave before leaving state service without adequate reason for taking the time off.

At the O.D. Heck center, auditors found during the year ending Feb. 22, 1984, that an average of 15 employees were absent each day of the week due to Workers' Compensation leave, and several had been involved in more than one work-related accident. While the center monitors its Workers' Compensation cases, the audit said managers must take a more aggressive role in reducing accidents and ensuring that the use of the special leave isn't abused.

Auditors also found inadequate supervision of employee attendance records at all three facilities. The records, they said, weren't checked to verify time worked or whether the employees charged their absences to their leave credits.

During the review in 1983 and 1984, O.D. Heck had about 860 full-time and 190 part-time employees and an annual payroll of \$16.4 million. At West Seneca, the staff numbered 2,300 with a \$39 million payroll. The central office had 849 employees and the payroll was \$21.7 million.