

Union says 1,400 SIDC jobs can be saved

By JULIE MACK
Advance Staff Writer

A state employees' union says its not too late to prevent the elimination of more than 1,400 jobs over the next two years at the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC).

Options include opening new state facilities on Staten Island which would employ the laid-off workers or transferring SIDC employees to jobs at College of Staten Island, which may acquire the SIDC campus, said spokespersons for the Civil Service Employees Association

(CSEA). The union represents SIDC's non-professional staff.

"(The layoffs) are an economic hardship for the region. Some of the SIDC workers will find other jobs, many of them in state service, but a good number of them will not. The unusual commuting and geographic considerations of Staten Island cannot be dismissed lightly," union official Denise Berkley said in an address to about 75 state legislators at a CSEA legislative brunch yesterday in Manhattan.

While preventing the SIDC layoffs is only one of the union's

many objectives for 1985, the job cuts — which were announced last week — were mentioned frequently at yesterday's gathering.

The SIDC employees are only a small percent of CSEA's 220,000 members, said union spokesman Stephen Madarasz, but the layoffs are symptomatic of what is happening to mental health care across the state. "The real problem is not SIDC but the larger picture," Madarasz said.

The layoffs are necessary because the institution, which cur-

rently houses about 700 mentally retarded clients, is scheduled to close by 1987 as part of the state's effort to transfer the mentally disabled to community residences.

"We realize the mental health system is not working and that it is in need of a major overhaul, but we are concerned about the direction the state is moving in," Madarasz said.

The union objects to the transfer of SIDC clients to upstate institutions to await community placement. CSEA officials have maintained that clients should be kept at SIDC until the com-