

## A look back

# Not 'Willowbrook,' SIDC still plagued

By JULIE MACK  
Advance Staff Writer

Many people connected with Staten Island Developmental Center — supporters and detractors alike — will tell you that SIDC has improved since 1975, but that its quality of care still falls short.

The question is a matter of degree — how significant the improvement has been, and the extent of the problems that still exist. And the issue has been recently muddied by an announcement from the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) that the agency plans to yank SIDC's federal share of Medicaid funding — \$21 million, half of the institution's operating budget — for failing to comply with federal standards on quality of care.

Alan Saperstein, regional associate director of HCFA, says that while conditions at the cen-

ter have not deteriorated, "in view of the circumstances, we would expect much more to have been done."

His comments are supported by attorneys with the New York Civil Liberties Union, which represents past and present SIDC residents in ongoing litigation. "Except for the fact that (the institution) is less crowded, I don't think the clients are really any better off now than they were in 1972," says Chris Hansen of the NYCLU.

These charges are angrily denied by Arthur Webb, commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, which operates SIDC. He says the institution does meet federal standards (his agency plans to appeal the federal decision to cut off Medicaid funds), and

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Peter Montessani and activity therapist Joann Parker walk down the corridor of the Richmond Complex of United Cerebral Palsy.