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Staten Island

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Developmental Center Oked

By MARY ENGELS

The Staten Island Developmental Center for the mentally retarded and developmentally disabled yesterday received the good news that the federal government had rescinded its decision to cancel the center's eligibility to participate in the Medicaid program.

Instead, the government will permit the earlier certification of the state's Office of Health Systems Management to continue Medicaid provider status for the center, formerly Willowbrook.

CENTER director James Walsh said that he had received the news in a letter sent to him by Alan Saperstein, associate regional administrator for the United

States Department of Health and Human Services.

Saperstein wrote Walsh that as a result of his earlier letter "asserting your belief that the center met the program requirements, we decided to conduct a federal follow-up survey to ascertain the status of the deficiencies that were identified in our inspection last February."

According to Walsh, the federal inspectors visited the center from June 12 to 18.

"As a result of their latest survey, which indicated that in fact many of the deficiencies previously identified have been corrected and significant progress had been made for the elimination of the remaining deficiencies, they decided to give us the go-ahead," Walsh said.

Improvements were found

in the areas of patient treatment and nutrition and an increase in the size of the nursing staff.

SAPERSTEIN'S letter also noted, "In the time that elapsed between our first surveys and the client census at the center, it declined from 550 to 298 patients and that only six residential buildings remained in use."

Saperstein also stated, "In order for the facility's Medicaid status to remain in effect, the center is expected to continue to demonstrate vigorous efforts to promptly correct all and any of the outstanding deficiencies."

Saperstein warned, "Due to the serious problems previously cited, this office will be carefully monitoring the center's performance in meeting requirements of Ti-

tle 19 of the Social Security Medicaid Act."

WALSH SAID he was "very pleased" with the decision, and said, "I felt, as I stated in my letter to Saperstein in May, that the center did meet the basic program requirements of Title 19."

Walsh noted the center also had been approved by "the city's Health Department, which recommended certification" shortly after the federal government's decision to decertify the center.

"My staff will certainly be glad to hear this news," he added.

Walsh also said that he awaited any list of remaining deficiencies from the federal government and hoped these "have also been addressed, as well."