

SIDC could set stage for other closings

By DAN JANISON
ADVANCE ALBANY BUREAU

ALBANY — Closing the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) as planned this year could help set the pace for ceasing operations at five similar institutions elsewhere in the state.

"Successes" that state officials achieve in phasing out SIDC and the Westchester Developmental Center will "guide strategies" for how the other five, including the Manhattan and Bronx developmental centers, are closed.

Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's budget request for fiscal 1987 includes that plan and also asks for an additional \$500,000 to expand the Institute for Basic Research (IBR), Willowbrook.

Research into causes of certain conditions "has underpinned IBR's activities over the past several years," Cuomo noted in his 594-page proposal released yesterday.

If accepted by the state Legislature, the spending plan would also pay for construction of a new day program center on the SIDC campus, as publicly discussed before.

So-called "design" funds totaling \$300 million are requested for the second phase of the project, called the Richmond Community Day Services Complex. The first phase is still underway, budget officials said.

Under a landmark 1975 court order arising from problems at Willowbrook, the state has been relocating people from large facilities to community residences, partly to allow them to receive more personal attention.

Overall, the portion of the budget dealing with services for the retarded and developmentally disabled totals several hundred million dollars.

Of planned spending for IBR, the budget text says "it can cost society as much as \$4 million to care for a developmentally disabled individual over his or her lifetime and . . . the personal toll is incalculable."

"This budget devotes increased resources to enhance research opportunities and expand their applications through prevention activities."

It also was revealed that a unit for "severely aggressive" persons under care of the state's main mental health agency will open in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, instead of on Staten Island as first proposed.

Cuomo's budget document again portrays economics as the driving motive for closing developmental centers, which include the Craig Developmental Center, Livingston County, the Rome Developmental Center in Oneida County and the Newark Developmental Center in Wayne County. (The Westchester Developmental Center is actually located in Dutchess County).

All would close by 1991 under Cuomo's plan.

Operating large and obsolete physical plants would be a waste of money, Cuomo maintains.

Cuomo's budget also acknowledges plans for a 72-bed unit for people with multiple disabilities, to be located at the South Beach Psychiatric Center.

Another \$1 million would keep in operation a host of programs that arose from efforts to implement the consent decree: The Willowbrook Review Panel, Consumer Advisory Board, the Professional Advisory Board, Legal Advisory Program and Clients Rights program.