

# Program to train workers caring for mentally retarded

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ALBANY — The College of Staten Island (CSI) will help devise a new program to educate and provide career advancement for workers who care for the mentally retarded, Gov. Mario M. Cuomo said in his eighth annual State of the State message.

CSI will work with the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) in establishing a certification program that will help retain direct care workers by training them for promotion eligibilities.

The Kennedy Fellows Training Program will be a partnership of state government, the City University of New York (CUNY) and the Center for Worker Education, along with the various voluntary providers who work with the mentally retarded.

"This program, which will build on the extensive experience of CUNY and its College of Staten Island, will begin initially with a certificate program for 60 direct-care workers from OMRDD and from not-for-profit provider agencies in New York City," Cuomo said.

The governor said he will propose funding for the program in his 1990-91 budget plan to be released on Jan. 16.

One of the themes in Cuomo's

address was doing more to retain state workers and not-for-profit service providers contracted with the state to care for clients in need.

"I hope you will agree that one group in particular — workers in the private and not-for-profit parts of our terribly burdened foster care system — deserves larger salaries, and we should supplement those salaries," the governor said.

Cuomo noted the mental hygiene and drug and alcohol agencies have all expanded community programs in recent years and will continue to do so. Salary increases will be proposed in "selected areas" to sustain and increase program operations.

Staten Island lawmakers applauded the program. "It's a benefit to an employee to help them up the career ladder. It's trying to improve the quality of your staff," said Donald Robbins, counsel to Assembly Mental Health chairwoman Elizabeth Connelly, D-West Brighton.

Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano, D-Dongan Hills, said the program continues the "historic tie" between CSI and the Staten Island Developmental Disability Services Office (DDSO). A consolidated CSI campus is being constructed at Willowbrook, formerly home of the mental institution where the DDSO is located.

"This program will serve the mentally retarded in a way the state can be proud of," he said.