

"The cuts are going to hurt. They're going to hurt everywhere."

Transportation and other services were judged to be "not quite as critically necessary" as respite care and crisis intervention, which will be the OMRDD's priorities, Byrne said. The state's goal will be to keep families intact amid the fiscal and emotional stress, he said.

Island care providers, as a group, are concerned. Their network is so tightly interwoven that even if one agency is left untouched by the budget cuts, it will feel the pinch when other agencies lose funds.

The Association for the Help of Retarded Children (AHC), for

example, relies heavily on other agencies for transportation. It expects to feel little immediate impact on its finances, but its staff members, who already have their hands full supervising programs and driving clients in the daytime, will be sent scurrying seven nights a week to transport children to evening activities.

"The programs they go to are on other sides of the Island," said Margo Black, manager of AHC, which has an office in Willowbrook. The agency has only one van, she said. "We'll always be on the road. It's going to be crazy."

A few agencies manage to provide all their own services and essentially operate outside the network. On Your Mark, which

serves more than 300 people, mostly school children, was informed that all of the \$80,000 it received last year for family support will be restored this year.

Still, with such extensive cuts being made all around it, even officials there are concerned.

"There is sort of a community feeling on the Island (among the care providers and clients)," said Eugene Spatz, executive director of On Your Mark. "It indirectly affects everyone."

Evidence of that bond can be found in an agreement reached by a handful of care providers to keep A Very Special Place's shuttle service alive for four weeks more than current funding allows. During those four weeks, if law-

makers have not restored funds, any losses incurred will be shared by the agency and Staten Island Aid, the Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development and possibly other agencies, Ms. Benoit said. But after four weeks, if the grants are not restored, the shuttle service will fold, she said.

Last year, the OMRDD had 31 funding contracts with Island agencies. Of those, 13 have been canceled in anticipation of a severely tightened budget, Byrne said.

Statewide, the OMRDD expects to lay off 495 people by the end of June, Byrne said, but the Staten Island office will lose only two people.