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State Will Treat 1,200 Children at Willowbrook School

48 Are Already There; Some Adults Used As Workmen

By ERWIN ENDRESS

Willowbrook State School on the grounds of Halloran VA Hospital will house up to 600 child-patients within six months and, under a continuing expansion program, will eventually handle 1,200 patients, Dr. Frank B. Glasser, assistant director of the faculty, reported today.

At the same time, Glasser, as a spokesman for the state Department of Mental Hygiene which operates the facility, revealed it will be the policy of the school to treat only children between the ages of one and 16.

He reported also that 48 children, ranging in age from one to five, are already being treated at Willowbrook.

These disclosures broke a long silence by the state department as to the future of the facility. It was nearly two years ago that the state agency, owner of the Halloran tract and buildings, decided to take over 40 percent of the area for the purpose of opening the school.

VA Has Lease

Although the entire Halloran facility was originally constructed for the purpose of opening such a school, the Department of Mental Hygiene agreed to allow the federal Veterans Administration, on a lease basis, to operate a temporary veterans' hospital there.

The state agency is already making use of three of an eventual nine buildings to comprise the school under present plans.

In revealing that patients are now at Willowbrook, Glasser stressed that only "hardship cases" have thus far been accepted.

"Our facilities are still extremely limited," he declared. "By careful screening, we have selected children for treatment on the basis of the greatest need."

He said that, while there is still a shortage of personnel there, it is probable new patients will be received at the rate of about 30 a month, although this is not yet certain.

Glasser said the Willowbrook school is "open in a limited way." Asked whether there would be any formal opening, he said he had no word that such plans are being made by the department.

Clarification as to the ages of patients to be housed at Willowbrook was significant in that the state agency had agreed, eight years ago when the facility was erected, to treat only mentally delinquent children there.

Reports had come, from time to time, of adult patients being housed at the school as it went ahead with preparation for an opening. Glasser said these were, and are, at Willowbrook for the purpose of handling simple chores and to aid in the expansion process.

The school official further emphasized that while it may seem "unusual" that there are 100 persons employed there now, many are occupied in the utility fields—painters, carpenters, plumbers, steamfitters and the like—all at work in preparing the facility for larger operation.

Need Nurses

Progress is considerably hampered by difficulty in recruiting nurses, he said, particularly those who will serve during afternoon and night shifts.

"We would be very happy to have more registered nurses who are willing to work at such hours," he said.

He added that three one-story buildings on the tract eventually will be utilized for the housing of infants, while five two-story buildings will be in use for ambulatory patients. There is a central building where meals are served. This contains a large kitchen and six dining rooms, one for employes and five for patients.

He said all buildings are being re-designed for children. The buildings to be used for housing will contain cribs and bedding for children. Clothing for this purpose is being stocked also.