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January 31, 1951

Halloran, Willowbrook Now Employ Over 1,500

Total Is Highest Since Hospital Reduced Size

More than 1,500 persons are currently employed in various capacities at Halloran VA Hospital and the adjacent Willowbrook State School, latest figures released by the institutions showed today.

This is the largest number of persons employed in the area since the state-federal decision last April to reduce Halloran's capacity in order to make way for the expansion of Willowbrook, a facility of the Department of Mental Hygiene.

Dr. Harold H. Berman, director of Willowbrook, pointed out that there are more jobs available for nurses, physio-therapists and attendants, both men and women. But there is no shortage of help at Halloran, where 945 persons are employed.

Won't Fill Gap

While the increasing number of jobs available may go as high as the 2,000 mark in the coming months, it will be insufficient to fill the employment gap created by the reduction of Halloran, which has employed several thousand persons at various times in recent years.

Dr. Berman said he now has 570 persons employed at Willowbrook and that his patient load is 2,072, an increase of more than 100 since last October. Present plans call for expansion of Willowbrook to care for about 3,000 patients.

Halloran officials said there are 575 veteran-patients now being treated there, with the hospital's bed capacity still listed at 692. It was pointed out that all hospitals leave a certain number of beds vacant for "emergency needs."

New Jobs Created

The shortage of help in various categories has been a Willowbrook problem since the facility first was opened here by the state Mental Hygiene Department. While jobs

have been gradually filled, expansion of the facility has created new job openings with the ensuing months.

Latest figures indicate there has been a considerable slowdown in hiring at Willowbrook. The school, which had been hiring at the rate of more than 100 persons a month during last August and September, increased its employment roles by only 17 since last October.

But the school's continued expansion is expected to create many new openings.

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100 Halloran Patients Still Await Transfer

Approximately 100 patients remain at Halloran VA Hospital who will have to be transferred or discharged by Feb. 15, it was announced today by Joseph V. McLoone, chief of special services.

Nearly 300 patients have been discharged or transferred to other Veterans Administration Hospitals in New York City and neighboring states.

McLoone said that with each group of patients transferred medical personnel have accompanied them as well as the special equipment so that there would be no interruption in treatment.

Discharged Services

Services for Island Veterans

First, there is the shutdown of Halloran VA Hospital, with the return of 30 beds at the U. S. Marine Hospital in Clifton to the Veterans Administration as the substitute for the big Willowbrook institution.

Second, the borough's VA contact office is to be closed April 1.

As in the case of Halloran, it's not the first time economy has been aimed at the contact office. In 1947, 1948 and 1949, it barely managed to survive VA retrenchment.

Now it's one of 18 in the state and 321 in the nation to be closed to save money.

We believe in economy in government, especially when funds must be diverted toward emergency measures, but such action must be balanced by an understanding of community problems.

In the overall planning, Staten Island is just one of the five boroughs of the city. And since it's the smallest in population, it may look to government officials as having the smallest need in the city.

But there's another way of looking at it, one Staten Island must repeatedly call to the attention of officials—the borough's geographical location.

If Island veterans must travel to Manhattan to file applications and seek advice, it takes them three hours on the average for the round trip. And they usually have to spend a much longer time in the Manhattan office than they would on Staten Island.

That veterans leaders are going to fight the edict can be taken for granted. They will campaign with the knowledge that they have won before and that they are fighting for a fair cause.

The VA, in applying its budgetary limitations to its program, should give Staten Island veterans a fairer share. Before ruling that the Island contact office must close, the time and cost of traveling to offices in other boroughs should be given weighty consideration.