

# Staten Island Advance

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## Buildings to House 1,000 Infants Planned for Willowbrook School

Completion of Willowbrook State School's \$5,750,000 expansion program will bring the "most modern infant care buildings in existence," Dr. Harold H. Berman, the school's director, said today.

Dr. Berman and other officials of the state Department of Mental Hygiene are poring over huge batches of blueprints for the huge project. The blueprints represent two years of detailed work to bring into reality buildings which meet specifications drawn by experts in the field of mental hygiene.

With final approval of the plans at least several weeks away, Dr. Berman disclosed that the boost in the patient census which is to follow actual construction will comprise nearly 1,000 infants who are mentally retarded.

**HE POINTED** out that the present infirmary-type buildings at Willowbrook were not expressly designed for infants. The six new infirmary buildings will be the first ever designed specifically for infants.

The H-shaped, one-story brick structures will feature centrally-located service centers, with dormitories situated in the four wings. Included in the designs are facilities suited to the most efficient methods of infant care. The buildings will feature forced ventilation, making possible the constant changing of the air within the structures.

Indicative of the pressing need of space for facilities for the mentally retarded, was the presence at Willowbrook recently of members of an advisory commission drawing plans for two new schools patterned after Willowbrook.

Touring the grounds under guidance of Dr. Berman were Dr. Russell E. Blaisdell, former director of Rockland State Hospital, and Dr. Mary E. Mercer of New York Hospital, Manhattan.

The new schools planned by the department will serve up-state areas, Dr. Berman said. Willowbrook serves metropolitan New York and Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

**MENTAL HYGIENE** officials have said that expansion at Willowbrook will ease greatly the pressure on the institution, where the admission policy continues to be based on "hardship." There are up to 20 new cases of mental



Dr. Harold H. Berman, director of Willowbrook State School, works on a batch of blueprints relating to the institution's projected building program.

deficiency in infants each day in New York City alone, it is estimated.

Setting forth its admission policy in the past, the department has said:

"While we do not seek to avoid or reduce the department's responsibilities in these tragic cases, we are overcrowded in our

present facilities. Even though we can take only cases of relatively greatest hardship, barring instance of obvious continued neglect, we are justified in making certain that all other avenues of assistance have been exhausted before we take the child from his home and place him in an institution."