

Problem Girls' Home To Open Within Year

By MARK WIESNER

Within a year's time the State Division of Youth hopes to have in operation a training center for 20 teenage delinquent New York City girls in a facility to be built on an eight-acre site in Willowbrook.

The actual timetable cited by Milton Luger, deputy director in charge of rehabilitation for the state agency, was for construction of the two buildings that will form the center in six months and for its operation to begin three or four months later.

It will be the fifth Short Term Adolescent Resident Training facility in operation in the state and the second for girls. The first girls' facility opens tomorrow in the upstate community of Amsterdam.

Construction of the facility

will be at a cost of approximately \$250,000, Luger said. It will be built off Forest Hill Rd. on a site across from the home of the director of Willowbrook State School.

ALTHOUGH it will be under the direction of an agency other than the Department of Mental Hygiene, which has jurisdiction over Willowbrook State School, residents of the facility will be given occupational assignments at the institution as part of the rehabilitation program.

The State Department of Public Works announced that bids will be opened tomorrow for various phases of construction of the facility. Public Works designed the buildings.

Luger denied that the brief announcement was in any way an effort to veil the coming construction. He said the matter had been thoroughly aired two years ago when the city transferred the land to the state.

Luger did acknowledge, however, that in communities where START centers have been established some antagonism has been shown.

"There have always been some individuals who have been fearful until they see our operation," he commented. "Once they see it, their fears have been quickly allayed. It has worked out this way consistently and we are very gratified about it."

LUGER SAID the girls sent to the facility for four to six months of training will have been thoroughly "screened" and will be teenagers who can function in an "open," rather than "structured" (prison), setting. They will be between 15 and 17 and all will be from the five boroughs.

The girls to be placed there will have appeared before the courts, he acknowledged, but some only as "persons in need

of supervision." They will be of normal intelligence and free of emotional disturbance.

"One of our criteria is that a confirmed drug addict is not eligible for the program," Luger said, noting that there are special facilities to meet their needs and that "we would like to fill a gap with other youths."

With a stay of four to six months each, the maximum turnover in a year's time will be 60 girls. The 20-girl limit will not be exceeded at any one time, it was stressed.

BOROUGH President Mascalco, on learning of the imminent construction of the facility, said he did not anticipate any adverse community reaction.

He said that the operation of the facility had won public acceptance when it was discussed publicly in 1962 and its location and plan of operation insure a worthwhile and humanitarian program that poses no danger to the community.

It will be built in a secluded area that is sparsely populated and on land that reaches to the westerly boundary of Sea View Hospital and Home.

"With the proper treatment, these young ladies who have gone astray will be straightened out," the borough president said. He said the occupational work they will receive at Willowbrook will be an important factor in rehabilitation.

CONSTRUCTION calls for two buildings, one 140 by 45 feet to house the residents, the other 45 by 70 feet to house the director and his family and assistant director. The buildings are so close to each other so to be almost "interconnected," it was said.

A staff of seven will run the operation and at least one staff member will occupy the dormitory building with the girls. Included on the staff will be a couple of house mothers and a secretary, as well as the director and the assistant director.

In the matter of community reaction, Luger said "there will always be some question raised, but we count on the intelligence and understanding of the local citizenry."

He predicted that doubts "will be quickly dissipated" and that members of the community will become "involved" in the program and play a helpful role.

He said that after a director is chosen, some prominent Staten Island residents will be asked to serve on a citizens advisory committee to help in "community interpretation."