



Willowbrook Charges Topic on Visiting Day

By MARK WIESNER

Today, with the dust still flying from the attack of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy on Willowbrook State School, hundreds of parents will show up at the institution to visit their retarded youngsters.

Some of the parents are aghast at what they consider an unfair and distorted attack. To some the disclosures are old hat.

Why the wide discrepancy among persons vitally concerned with the health and safety of their offspring?

"There are some people who would prefer to bury their heads in the sand," said Mrs. Israel Epstein, president of the Benevolent Association for Retarded Children.

"Some parents could not live if they thought that everything isn't all right," she continued.

"There are good buildings at Willowbrook and some parents who have their children in them do not know of the others and they do not care.

"Then there is a hard core of parents who are concerned about the welfare of all the children at Willowbrook.

TO THESE she said what



ROBERT F. KENNEDY

Kennedy said was not a revelation.

His remarks duplicated her own before the Joint Legislative Committee on Mental Retardation so closely that "they might have collaborated," she said.

"I would like to get across that we have been complaining of these conditions years

before Dr. (Jack) Hammond arrived."

The head of the Willowbrook parents group credited Hammond, the facility's director, with trying to improve conditions.

"The Department of Mental Hygiene didn't seem to care until Dr. Hammond got there."

Among those calling for an investigation of Willowbrook is Assemblyman Edward J. Amann Jr., a member of the joint legislative committee until recently.

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HE SENT a telegram to Gov. Rockefeller asking for a probe "in view of the serious nature of the charges made which far exceed overcrowding."

He had never encountered conditions as described in his visits there, the West Brighton legislator said.

Different of opinion over the extent of the federal government's ability to help was as widespread as it was over the degree of accuracy of Kennedy's attack.

Hammond said that the institution had applied for a federal grant of \$100,000 to aid in an experimental program affecting 42 children.

The application was sent back for "more information" he said.