

State Increasing Role With 2 Big Projects

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The already significant role the state Department of Mental Hygiene plays on Staten Island will be even greater in the future.

The agency operates Willowbrook State School, the nation's largest institution for the retarded with a patient population of nearly 5,000 and a

staff of half that number.

Willowbrook, which has been badly overcrowded for years, has been the focus of considerable effort to alleviate overcrowding and improve conditions.

Construction of new facilities and renovation of old continues at an unparalleled pace. Included among these moves are the pre-fabricated buildings under construction there.

On Willowbrook's grounds, another facility is being erected that represents a gigantic thrust forward in the fight against retardation.

This is the \$7-million Institute for Basic Research Into Mental Retardation, which will probe the causes of retardation.

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STILL ANOTHER facility that the department has earmarked for Staten Island is a mental hospital slated for the Ocean Breeze sector.

The appointment of Dr. Alan Miller as the new director of the department has not changed the plans or the timetable for its construction, a department spokesman said.

The long-planned facility has undergone considerable revision since first proposed. It was scaled down from a 5,000, to 3,000 to 1,000-bed institution as the trend in treatment of mentally ill moved away from giant institutions.

Even the 1,000-bed hospital plan is subject to modification, the spokesman said.

Announcements of a 1,000-bed hospital represents a concept of the size of the structure rather than its actual capacity.

be built along with it represents a maximum, rather than the actual intended capacity.

Movement in the mental health field is to build smaller facilities closer to the patient's home community to lessen the separation of the ill person from the community, it was explained.

The department has targeted late 1971 as the completion date for the projects.