



Work proceeds on the construction of three pre-fabricated buildings at Willowbrook State School that are expected to be ready in late August. They will house 300 youngsters, lessening overcrowding at the institution. S.I. Advance Photo by John Padula

## Waiting List Grows, Willowbrook Reports

By MARK WIESNER

More than 800 children in the New York City area—most of them severely retarded—have been waiting up to 20 months for admission to Willowbrook State School, it was learned today.

The situation disclosed by Willowbrook's director, Dr. Jack Hammond, is growing progressively worse with each day adding new names to the waiting list.

Hammond mentioned developments that by the end of the summer will enable the overcrowded institution to admit some patients in all categories, but will still

"not freely open the waiting list."

One is the transfer of 480 patients, whose families reside in Nassau and Suffolk, to newly-opened Suffolk State School at the end of the summer.

The other is completion in late August of three pre-fab buildings that will house 300.

Even with these changes, Willowbrook with a current patient population of 5,575 will be 700 over its capacity and a good deal of the backlog will remain.

Hammond explained that an institution as large as Willowbrook can absorb a certain amount of excess patients and

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that the transfers will allow for redistributing patients and admitting some patients in such heavily overcrowded categories as those who are ambulatory, severely retarded.

The waiting list has grown since October 1964 when admissions were closed on all but a selective basis on Hammond's insistence.

Overcrowding at Willowbrook was the main basis of the severe criticism of conditions made by Sen. Robert F. Kennedy last year.

Even with the ban, Willowbrook has been admitting "more patients than any other state institution" for the year ending last March 31, Hammond said, although this was "only about 30 per cent of the number formerly admitted."

Willowbrook has been admitting 20 to 30 young children a month and there has been some space for taking in the physically handicapped retarded.

Hammond estimated the average waiting time for prospective patients as 12 to 14 months.

As most mildly retarded youngsters are now kept in the community, the vast majority of those on the waiting list are severely retarded and cause tremendous hardships in their family situations.

"I certainly sympathize with the parents of children on the waiting list but my first concern is the institution as it stands," Hammond remarked.

"I hope we will be able to accommodate them soon."