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Willowbrook Begins Transfer of Patients

By MARK WIESNER

Willowbrook State School will begin the long-awaited transfer of patients to new Suffolk State School this month, one of a number of moves designed to reduce overcrowding and improve conditions at the nation's largest institution for the retarded.

In addition to the transfers, Dr. Jack Hammond, Willowbrook's director, said the new bank of classrooms and 10 pre-fab buildings will be completed this month and placed in use.

"Until Nov. 30, we will be first transferring younger and physically handicapped children whose parents reside in Nassau and Suffolk County," Hammond said.

"The new hospital already has patients who had been transferred from Willow-

brook to Bronx State Hospital on a temporary or holding basis over the last two years." These number about 700.

Hammond said there will be about 120 in the first group of new transfers and approximately 600 more will be shifted later on.

The pre-fabs built at a cost of \$1.5-million, will accommodate 300.

The first block will be ready Sept. 12, Hammond said, and the others about a week later.

The significant feature of the pre-fabs, the director noted, is that "no ward will have more than 30 patients and each has its own classroom and day-room." Children between the ages of 6 and 12 will occupy the new buildings.

The transfers and addition

total space for 300 will dent the overcrowding that has plagued Willowbrook and has been the basis for criticism of conditions at the school.

Despite a closed admission policy, Willowbrook is still more than 1,300 over its rated capacity of 4,528.

The first wing of a \$1.2 million addition that will add 23

classrooms to the number already existing also will open Sept. 12. The remaining classrooms will be ready within the month.

"This means we will be able to expand the program for those attending school so more will be able to attend a full day," Hammond explained. He said 992 youngsters

ages 5 to 21, are presently in school.

He said that experimental programs conducted showed that severely retarded youngsters, previously thought to be untrainable, could derive benefits from schooling.

Hammond said he has asked for classroom facilities for an additional 600 youngsters who fall in this classification and is encouraged by the reception the request received.