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'Task force' due at Willowbrook

By JANE KURTIN

Democratic County Chairman Dante Ferrari has called for an investigation of Willowbrook State School to be conducted independently of the state Department of Mental Hygiene.

Ferrari, who said he has received distressing calls from parents of patients in the institution, promised that a task force of senators and assemblymen will visit Willowbrook early in January.

The task force, Ferrari reported, will be appointed by Brooklyn Assemblyman Stanley Steingut, minority leader of the Assembly.

"I don't believe," Ferrari said, "that the kind of investigation called for by Assemblyman Edward J. Amann can accomplish anything.

"It involves officials of the state Department of Mental Hygiene who are appointed by the governor. I feel that that leads toward another whitewash."

Ferrari's interest in Willowbrook, he explained, has a personal side. He has a nephew who is a patient there.

"When my nephew was living with my sister, he was able to learn certain things. He could

dress and feed himself and he was toilet trained. If he'd had training," Ferrari said, "I think he could have learned more. But he hasn't gotten it."

"There are other children at the institution who are trainable," Ferrari continued, "and who are not being reached."

"Some of them can hardly be fed properly when the attendant staff can only manage about three to four minutes to feed those who can't help themselves.

"In the richest country in the world and the richest state in the union," Ferrari concluded, "the situation we have at Willowbrook is ridiculous."