

Editorials

This help is essential

The federal government just has to relax its regulation concerning the standards under which institutions like Willowbrook State School are entitled to Medicaid reimbursements. Otherwise there's a very good chance that Willowbrook, deficient as its present services to its retarded residents are, will have to cut those services even further, or maybe even close.

A great deal of the situation may be blamed on the bureaucratically schizophrenic way the state sets up standards for its institutions, which it knows they can't fulfill with the money the state provides them.

Then the state's Health Department makes inspections and declares that the state's institutions don't meet the standards. And the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare accepts the state's own assessments of its own institutions as a measure of whether or not Medicaid funds should be provided.

The care of retarded people of all ages and degrees of retardation may not always require the exacting standards that have been set up for nursing homes and other mental institutions. Some of Willowbrook's charges to manage to get about and do things for themselves, as other children do. But the firm standards are definitely in order for those who need care comparable to that of an infant child, though they may even have reached adult age.

Perhaps the regulations aren't exactly tailored to the benefit of such institutions as Willowbrook. If they aren't, they should be. And it would be best if

the specifications were set up on the federal level, rather than relying on states to devise their own.