

Triple probe on Willowbrook

By JANE KURTIN

Three separate hearings have been scheduled to investigate conditions at Willowbrook State School.

Assemblyman Edward J. Amann, who last month refused a request by Manhattan Assemblyman Andrew Stein to convene legislative hearings with subpoena power, announced that the Joint Legislative Committee on Mental and Physical Handicaps will take testimony in Albany sometime next month.

Although the hearings were originally scheduled for the second week in February, they were postponed indefinitely because the committee has not been able to secure a hearing

room, a spokesman for the Department of Mental Hygiene said.

Plans are being made, however, for the hearing to be held possibly toward the end of February.

Amann, a member of the joint legislative committee, explained the change regarding the hearing by saying: "Before the governor announced that additional funds would be available for the Department of Mental Hygiene, there was no purpose in having hearings. Now that there is money to work with, the hearings might serve some purpose."

Employees of the Department of Mental Hygiene, employees of Willowbrook and parents of patients in the institution will be requested to testify.

Closer to home, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has scheduled hearings to begin Monday, although the location has not been determined.

Thus far, members of the panel who will hear testimony for the SPCC are Councilman Frank Biondolillo, chairman; William Katz, and Ira Raab, attorney for the SPCC.

Katz explained that the purpose of these hearings will be to compile "essentially what has been disclosed by the media into a formal format to be presented to the legislative bodies which will best be able to effect change."

Anyone with information pertinent to Willowbrook State School may testify.

The Citizens United for the Handicapped, which termed Gov. Rockefeller's \$600 million appropriation for the Department of Mental Hygiene's next fiscal year "totally unacceptable," will hold a hearing next Friday at 11 a.m. in Albany.

The organization, which represents 30 statewide organizations concerned with the care, treatment, rehabilitation and education of the mentally retarded, will take testimony from parents, professionals and community leaders on "the existence of subminimal conditions in state institutions."

The hearing will be at Chancellor's Hall in the Education Building, opposite the State Capitol.