

Probe list up a notch

Another investigation which could have a bearing on the welfare of patients in Willowbrook State School and the state's other mental facilities is to be launched by State Sen. Donald M. Halperin, D-Brooklyn. He announced today that he would investigate the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene to see what type of care is provided for the mentally retarded.

Halperin, a member of the Senate Committee on Mental Hygiene, said in remarks prepared for a news conference today at Willowbrook:

"We must examine the priorities used by the Department of Mental Hygiene in determining how the mentally retarded are treated in New York."

"We have to take a hard look at what we want to accomplish in caring for the mentally retarded and that is why I plan to look into the entire operation of the State Department of Mental Hygiene."

Commenting on Gov. Rockefeller's recent announcement that \$5 million would be released to the Department now and \$20 million in April, Halperin said that the funds would not correct the

understaffing situation at Willowbrook.

"In Dec. 1970, there were 687 more employes at Willowbrook than there are now," he said. "Even with the new funds the governor has authorized, the facility will be 387 employes below its authorized strength."

Halperin's investigation is the fourth to be announced since the beginning of last week.

The Joint Legislative Committee for Mental and Physical Handicapped, of which Assemblyman Edward J. Amann is a member, has scheduled hearings in Albany for some time in February.

Although initially planned for the second week of the month, the hearings were postponed when the committee could not secure a hearing room.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a newly chartered group, will hold hearings next week in Manhattan to investigate alleged neglect of patients at Willowbrook.

In Albany tomorrow, the Citizens United for the Handicapped, representing 30 statewide organizations, will hold hearings in Chancellor's Hall opposite the state capitol.