

Charges 'Euthanasia' Of Retarded Children

By ROGER WETHERINGTON

As three seriously retarded children sat smiling in their mothers' laps, a psychologist charged yesterday that institutions such as Willowbrook and Letchworth Village "neglect" such children and spend all available time, effort and money trying to help less seriously handicapped youngsters.

"They say these children can't be helped," said Jack Gootzeit, the psychologist who heads the Institutes of Applied Human Dynamics, a voluntary nonprofit agency. "But most of them could learn to stand. These institutions have just got to get them up and outside."

He said an "official policy of neglect" amounted to virtually "an unintended policy of euthanasia."

Dr. Jack Hammond, director of Willowbrook, on Staten Island, countered that in the last decade the school has given special emphasis to such patients and now had 450 of its 800 most seriously retarded children in a training program.

He conceded that, "generally speaking, a child will always do better" if he stays at home to get "individual attention, warmth and love."

Gootzeit, speaking in the office of Assemblyman Anthony J. Mercorella (D-L-Bronx) at 600 Madison Ave., introduced three children that he described as examples of children who had been "neglected" at institutions but

were now functioning in some ways.

One of the mothers, Mrs. Kathleen Holland of Manhattan, said her son, Michael, 11, blind, hyperactive and retarded, had lost so much weight that she "couldn't recognize him" during 10 days he spent in Willowbrook eight years ago. In programs run by Gootzeit's organization, she said, he has learned to walk and play. He cannot talk and is not toilet-trained, she said.

Another of the mothers, Mrs. Elaine Weinberger, of Munsey, N.Y., said her daughter, Stephanie, 13, had been considered untrainable at Letchworth even though she could already walk. She soon forgot how, Mrs. Weinberger said. After being removed, Stephanie even learned to read, her mother reported.

The third mother, Mrs. Carolyn Scarcello of Scarsdale, said doctors warned that her daughter, Judy, now 7, would never be able to "walk, talk or ho'd a cookie." Today Judy is "toilet trained, walks, sets the table and does everything." Mrs. Scarcello reported.