

Task force ends tour

Backs smaller centers for retarded

The head of a federal team that ended a two-day visit to city facilities for the mentally retarded yesterday said he would like to see more small-scale treatment centers.

"I've seen the worst of things; I've seen the best of things," said Dr. Bertram Brown, director of the National Institute of Mental Health.

He and about a dozen federal officials visited two facilities for the mentally retarded in Queens. On Monday, the group toured the hard-pressed mammoth Willowbrook State School.

The task force came to the state schools at the request of Sen. Jacob K. Javits and the invitation of Gov. Rockefeller.

Willowbrook houses 5,000 patient. The facilities toured yesterday treat fewer than 300 persons each — some on the non-resident basis.

Brown said of one facility:

"Five-hundred to 2,000 of the kids we saw yesterday at Willowbrook could be in the programs we're seeing today. These are the kids we saw vegetating at Willowbrook."

Officials at one of the smaller facilities said they had room for 140 additional patients, but budgetary considerations made hiring of the requisite staff impossible.

Brown said several avenues to reform care for the mentally

retarded are open to the federal government and that he will submit a report with recommendations in the coming months.

"I'm happy the crisis of Willowbrook brought together the forces that might make a difference," he said.

Later, the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers urged a full-scale investigation of the state's mental institutions to determine what the state must do to meet standards of adequate care for mental patients.

Dorothy Knox, chairman of the chapter's mental health council, questioned the value of the inspection by the team.

Mrs. Knox said, "If this is the beginning of a thorough and comprehensive review of conditions in our state mental institutions, then we would view this first effort as a good beginning and a hopeful move in the right direction.

"If on the other hand, this whirlwind two-day review is all that will be done now by the HEW team, then we would take strong exception to what inevitably will be a token show of concern."