

Transfers, hiring to relieve crush at Willowbrook

ALBANY - (UPI) — The state Mental Hygiene Department announced today that Willowbrook State School and other state schools for the mentally retarded will face reductions in overcrowding and improved staffing later this month.

Included in the program is the opening of two new mental retardation units at state hospitals at Harlem Valley in Wingdale and Middletown State Hospital.

The new units will hold about 350 mentally retarded adults.

Transfers will start today when the Wassaic State School moves 29 adult residents to Wingdale. Eventually, 200 residents from Wassaic and 100 from Willowbrook will move to Wingdale.

The state budget division has approved 228 clinical and support positions to enable the new unit to meet federal

standards. The second transfer is scheduled June 15 when the first of an eventual 144 residents of Letchworth Village in Thiells are moved into the new unit at Middletown. About 100 new jobs had been requested for Middletown.

Additionally in the next few weeks, the first of another 200 Willowbrook residents will move into a new unit being set up at Creedmoor State Hospital in Queens.

"These units will provide more spacious accommodations and higher staff ratios so that a more enriched program can be developed for state school residents," said Dr. Frederic Grunberg, deputy commissioner for mental retardation and children's services.

Funds for the new units came from \$12.4 million added to the mental hygiene budget this year by the Legislature.