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Director Named for State School

By SUSAN TOMER

ROME—Dr. Jack Hammond, for eight years the director of the trouble-ridden Willowbrook State School in Staten Island, has been named the director of the Rome State School, where he once spent five years as assistant clinical director.

Hammond's appointment, effective July 6, was announced yesterday by Dr. Alan D. Miller, state mental hygiene commissioner. Hammond succeeds Dr. Charles Greenberg who retired in March.

Hammond said in a telephone interview from New York City that he requested the transfer to Rome.

"I like the area," he said, "and I think that Rome State School has a lot of potential to come up to the newest standards in a reasonable amount of time."

New standards for space, staffing and residents' programs have been set by the 10-member Accreditation Council for Residential Facilities for the Mentally Retarded. Hammond is one of two council representatives from the American Psychiatric Association, but, like other Council members, didn't participate in drawing up the standards. They are the work of professional consultants, he said.

Asked if unfavorable publicity about the Willowbrook School prompted him to seek a transfer to another institution, Hammond replied that "While we have made reasonable progress (at Willowbrook) I think it's time for a change."

Last winter the Willowbrook School was criticized by some of its employes and by the press for allegedly cruel treatment of residents, most of whom are profoundly retarded. Films of the school and its

residents were shown on television news programs and on the "Dick Cavett Show."

Hammond doesn't deny that the school has problems.

"The recent publicity only reflects the results of the fiscal crisis we went through from late 1970 through the spring of 1972," he said. Willowbrook, as the largest such school in the state, was "the hardest hit."

"All of our older, larger state residential facilities for the mentally retarded were hard hit by this crisis, and they also have long suffered from a long fiscal crisis all the way through," Hammond said.

Willowbrook has a population of about 5,000 residents. In Hammond's eight years there, he has reduced the population by about 1,000 and has cut admissions from 800 per year down to about 225, largely by transferring patients to other institutions and by limiting — and finally by stopping altogether — admissions. The latter was done in January.

Hammond plans to use similar procedures to reduce the population at Rome State School, which stands at about 3,500. He hopes to reduce that number by about 1,200.

Residents would be transferred as close to their family's home as possible or to schools in their county of origin. Transfers would probably be made to the Eleanor Roosevelt Development Center in Albany, the Syracuse State School and the Wilton State School near Saratoga, he said.

In addition, Hammond hopes for the expansion of Rome State's family care and community status programs, which allow residents to live and work in the outside community.

Hammond was praised by Miller, who said that "considerable progress has taken place" at Willowbrook during Hammond's directorship.

According to Miller, Hammond was instrumental in implementing innovative rehabilitation and special education programs, and was a leader in improving intergroup relations among employes. Willowbrook was one of the first of the department's facilities to have a human rights advisory council, Miller said.

"The conditions at Willowbrook weren't of my making," Hammond said. "I tried to get improvements and within the fiscal capabilities of the state, I did make improvements."