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Review set at schools for retarded

ALBANY (UPI) — Review committees have been established at all state schools for the mentally retarded to evaluate each school's physical facilities and programs for compliance with nationally recognized accreditation standards, the State Department of Mental Hygiene disclosed yesterday.

A spokesman said the committees also would be responsible for making plans, wherever needed, to bring facilities and programs up to established standards.

The spokesman, Dr. Frederic Grunberg, deputy commissioner for mental retardation and children's services, also said a memorandum has been sent to all state school directors informing them that the practice of secluding residents in locked rooms will no longer be used at department facilities.

Questioned about the memorandum, a department spokesman said such seclusion is not a widespread practice but that it has been used "only if a patient is behaving in a way that is dangerous to other patients."

He said that while seclusion offers protection to patients, it does not solve the problem—and that by barring seclusion, the schools could devote staff members to helping solve the patient's problems. Staff help, he said, would be just as effective from a security standpoint and would be more humane.