

... 31 trainees graduate into new jobs

By ELAINE HESS

The second class of two-week trained mental hygiene assistant therapy aides will start work tomorrow at Willowbrook State School. The new voluntary program is sponsored by the Human Resources Administration, in cooperation with the Island office of the Social Services.

The 31 in yesterday's graduating class will continue to get minimal babysitting allowance, lunch money and carfare, until they are placed full time on the school payroll at \$6,400 a year on a permanent basis in a regular Civil Service position.

Filling the need for more trained attendants at understaffed Willowbrook and giving jobs to people on public assistance has been the two-fold purpose of the job training program.

The first class of 23 which started June 7, is now on the regular payroll and off welfare. Only two from the entire program failed to pass the Civil Service examination, a job prerequisite.

The program aspires to promote job stability for people receiving assistance who have

little or no training suited for employment.

Arthur Seltzer, a staff member of the Human Resources Administration, said the program was "probably the first of its kind in the country and probably one of the hardest programs to develop, and this is the truth." He explained that to get the program under way

the HRA had to work "across city and state lines and cooperate in difficult areas."

One area was to "try and adapt people on welfare to working under difficult conditions and try to have them do an excellent job, so they can augment the staff at Willowbrook with the hope of becoming professionals."

Kenneth Lasnick, Island social services director, said of the program: "It's been a terrific success."

The two-week service orientation course in mental retardation covered training in nursing education and child development and was based on lectures by specialists.

Psychodrama, a therapy in

which participants acted out a scene they had observed in the wards, with some acting the role of patients, was included in the training.

Dr. Robert Reich, director of the office of psychiatry for the Social Services Department, said the idea originated with J. Farrel Jones, first deputy commissioner of HRA.



Mrs. Sylvia Hunter, left, director of health affairs at Willowbrook State School, congratulates Miss Jessie Mae Parker and Bennie Felton, after graduation from a training course for jobs at the school.

S.I. Advance Photo by Tony Carannante