

Reneged on Willowbrook aid, assemblyman says

NEW YORK (AP) — Assemblyman Andrew Stein today charged that the federal government had reneged on a commitment to provide a "massive aid program" for the Willowbrook State School and other state facilities for the mentally retarded.

Stein, chairman of the State

Democratic Task Force on Health, said a federal team that inspected the school seven months ago promised a "concerted federal effort" to "rectify the situation as swiftly as possible."

He said Dr. Bertram S. Brown, director of the National Institute of Mental Health and chairman of the inspection team, promised to recommend federal assistance to the state by the end of last April. But so far, Stein said, there have been no such proposals.

The assemblyman said that although deteriorating conditions at Willowbrook had "stabilized" after recent state-funded increases in staff, the current level of care is still "abysmally poor."

Referring to the inspection team designated by HEW Secretary Elliott Richardson last spring, Stein said:

"Now it is apparent that there was no sense of urgency on their part, and we are forced to apply pressure again if we want to receive any response."

Stein said the team was originally requested by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, Sen. Jacob Javits, R-N.Y., and State Mental Hygiene Commissioner Alan Miller as "an attempt to defuse an embarrassing and agonizing issue."

He said that "the appearance of a team of ostensibly committed officials suggested that the horrifying conditions were to be remedied," but nothing has yet been done.