

## Willowbrook, Other Homes Lose U.S. Aid

By ROGER WETHERINGTON  
Poor staffing ratios at Willowbrook and 10 state schools for the retarded have cost the institutions federal accreditation as skilled nursing homes, and they stand to lose an estimated \$10 million to \$15 million in medicaid funds from this year's budget, Rep. Mario Biaggi (D-C.N.Y.) disclosed yesterday.

He said officials of the State Department of Mental Hygiene had deliberately withheld news of the setback. The department, which operates the state schools, came under heavy fire last January after a hiring freeze mandated by the Legislature caused staff shortages and a decline in quality care, especially at Willowbrook.

### May Qualify Again

Dr. Frederic Grunberg, deputy mental hygiene commissioner in charge of mental retardation services, said a higher budget and the hiring of 3,000 additional employees at the state schools since April had improved care. He expects Willowbrook and all the other state schools to qualify again as skilled nursing homes "within six months or a year," he said.

Biaggi disclosed that the state schools, along with a number of private nursing homes, had been warned more than a year ago that they had failed to meet tougher federal standards. After assorted grace periods, the state schools lost their nursing home accreditation June 20.

### 11,000 Patients Lose

They were downgraded to the status of "intermediate care facilities." Until the loss of accreditation, 11,000 of the homes' 24,000 residents were eligible for skilled nursing care reimbursement running at \$21.40 per patient a day.

Their reimbursement in intermediate care facilities is expected to be only \$12.80, federal officials said.

William F. Pachen, the Mental Hygiene Department's director of patient resources, said he worked out a plan under a provision of the medicaid law to hike the reimbursement for intermediate care to \$21. But Morton Chalef, associate commissioner of the U. S. Medical Services and the federal official heading medicaid matters here, was doubtful such a move was possible.

The Price Commission, furthermore, blocked the hike, permitting the department to raise its medicaid reimbursement only \$9 million. It had sought a \$30 million hike, roughly the amount believed lost in the accreditation hassle.