

Willowbrook too crowded, official says

The problem at Willowbrook State School is overcrowding which leads to poor sanitation and dehumanization, Frederick K. Grunberg, deputy commissioner of the state Department of Mental Hygiene, testified yesterday in Brooklyn Federal Court.

Grunberg told the court that the patients at Willowbrook are not receiving adequate custodial care, but he said that conditions at the school are improving.

3RD DAY OF HEARINGS

His testimony came on the third day of hearings before Judge Orrin Judd on a suit brought by several parents of patients at Willowbrook and by the New York Association of Retarded Children, charging that the state has failed to provide sufficient care for patients. The plaintiffs are seeking a court order that would set minimum standards for treatment of retarded residents in Willowbrook.

According to Grunberg, the population at Willowbrook will be reduced by 1,000 patients by March 1973 and another 1,000 by March 1974. So far, the population has been decreased by only 350 residents. Grunberg admitted he had no specific plan to implement the reduction but said he is expecting a

report from his staff sometime next month.

In his testimony, Grunberg acknowledged an affidavit submitted earlier to the court in which he promised that no seclusion would be permitted at Willowbrook. Two cases that he had been made aware of since June, he said, he corrected with disciplinary action and firm directives.

Grunberg said a survey taken in February disclosed that of the 5,241 residents at Willowbrook, more than 3,000 had been there for over 10 years and 2,854 had been there 20 years or more.

Following Grunberg's testimony, Philip Roos, executive director of National Association of Retarded Children, told the court that the longer residents stay at Willowbrook, the faster they deteriorate.

"A person of normal intelligence, if forced to live under such conditions as present at Willowbrook," he said, "would soon lose those human qualities we all cherish." These conditions are avoidable, he added.

Judge Judd adjourned the hearing until tomorrow when he expects to conclude the hearing.