

# Willowbrook Tightens Reins on Staff

By ROGER WETHERINGTON

The Willowbrook State School has radically stepped up disciplinary actions against employes in recent months, officials disclosed yesterday.

The institution long has been plagued by high absenteeism, thefts and abuse of residents by some attendants.

Harry Elizarian, deputy director of the Staten Island institution for the retarded, said disciplinary action has been taken against 17 persons so far this year. Some of them have been followed up in the criminal courts, he said. Between 1959 and 1971, the number of disciplinary actions ranged between three and 10 a year.

In 1972, there were 19 disciplinary hearings, most of them in the second six months.

Since July 1, 13 employes have been fired, two have resigned, one was suspended, two were fined

and three reprimanded, officials reported. Charges against one employe were dismissed, and four employes were found not guilty. Eight cases still are pending.

Dr. Miodrag Ristic, the school's director, said four or five of the cases involved alleged abuse by attendants against the school's retarded residents. But he said most involved thefts, absenteeism and tardiness.

Critics of the institution have blamed some of its shortcomings on morale problems and poor job performance among its low-skilled and low-paid staff. The critics, however, conceded that the personnel troubles were partially an outgrowth of other problems, especially the school's

chronic overcrowding and understaffing.

A spokesman for the Civil Service Employees Association, which represents the Willowbrook staff, said the school administration's frequent charges of "rampant" absenteeism and other failures were "grossly exaggerated." He said that the union provides lawyers for its members in disciplinary hearings and occasionally in criminal court actions.

But he said the union had no wish to "belabor the issue" once an employe has been "proved guilty" of wrongdoing or failing to live up to the rules of the contract.