

foster parents are interviewed by CSU staffers and must get their homes inspected and licensed.

For each ex-resident in the home, the foster parents receive \$195 a month to cover maintenance, food, laundry and board. The ex-resident receives \$17 a month for personal use. Clothing is supplied by Willowbrook. If the necessary clothing is not available, a New York State standard voucher is issued. There is no actual money involved, but it allows for the purchase of items of clothing in certain stores. Some \$300 a year is provided per resident for clothing.

Often, Willowbrook employees become foster care parents. Mrs. Ina Sullivan, a team leader in the central habilitative services unit, recently brought an 8-year-old Downs Syndrome girl into her home.

The child had been institutionalized her entire life. At Willowbrook, she was one of many children who never had visitors. She does not speak.

Mrs. Sullivan is the mother of three teen-age sons and had always wanted a daughter. Employed at Willowbrook since February, she had decided to spend her lunch hours with a child who never had visitors. Her decision to bring the child home in foster care was "more emotional than anything else" and her family was excited about it.

The child had come home with Mrs. Sullivan for day visits before moving in, but the first few days of actually living there, of being part of the family, were telling.

"She had spent her time in Willowbrook sitting against the wall, playing with her shoe laces," Mrs. Sullivan said.

SMILES APPEAR

The little girl who had rarely smiled at the school, began to smile, Mrs. Sullivan said. She had never been exposed to animals before, but was now petting the two dogs in the Sullivan house.

Used to hard Willowbrook floors, she found it difficult to walk on the grass or carpets. She kept feeling textures — of drapes, furniture and walls.

As each child is placed in foster care, there must be written consent of the child's own parents. In Mrs. Sullivan's case, this held up placement for weeks. And since the child was not allowed to visit overnight until the placement was made, Mrs. Sullivan said the delay stretched while the child remained in the school.

"In placing her, Willowbrook was more concerned with following rules than it should have been. Rules are important but they shouldn't be more important than people. The institution is just so big it gets in the way," Mrs. Sullivan said.

The program of decentralization — making Willowbrook into smaller, more manageable units — is the major thrust behind the placement of Willowbrook residents into the community.

(Last of five articles.)