

Hearing set on staffing at Willowbrook

Federal Court Judge Orrin G. Judd set a Dec. 14 hearing to decide if there has been substantial compliance with a court order calling for increased staffing and physical improvements at Willowbrook State School.

A Nov. 30 deadline had been set to allow the school to hire attendants to meet a one-to-nine ratio. It was the second extension since the original order, issued in April by Judd, specifying that "400 additional ward attendants (be hired) to provide a ratio of nine residents to one attendant in all buildings housing severely retarded or emotionally disturbed patients."

The order was modified in May to include only on-the-ward direct care staff members working in the treatment room. The Department of Mental Hygiene was granted an extension in May, and again in June by the court.

An order, holding Dr. Miodrag Ristich, director of the facility, in contempt of court, could be issued if it is shown that there was not sufficient compliance by last Sunday's deadline.

Judge Judd previously denied a motion that Ristich be held in contempt for failure to comply, but said the question would be reopened after the deadline expired.