

Editorial Page

Our opinion

Two-thirds elsewhere

It's akin to this: The employer tells his worker the pay scale is going to be increased from \$1 an hour to \$10. Then, in the midst of the joy, the boss says each worker will be limited to three hours of work a week and it isn't certain how many workers will be kept.

So it was at Willowbrook State School the other day. The director told of a \$1.1-million remodeling plan for "humanizing" conditions for patients at the institution. One of the worst units, Building 27, will be among those renovated. Building 27, which now houses 150 of the most severely and profoundly retarded, will accommodate 47.

That's the pattern. Two-thirds of the patients at Willowbrook will be sent elsewhere.

Where is this "elsewhere" and what are the conditions like there?

One can imagine the concern of the families of the Willowbrook patients.

After years of neglect, things are finally beginning to happen at Willowbrook. We applaud these heavy application of funds and expertise.

But the state continues to fumble its public relations. It fails to understand the impact on the families of the patients. Or it doesn't seem to have gone all-out to erase doubts.

We continue to fret about the "elsewheres" to which the patients are being sent. They may be superb care facilities, but it's also conceivable that they may become "little Willowbrooks." We at the Advance, who helped air and improve conditions at the Island institution, don't know much, if anything, about these transfer facilities. Members of the parents' group don't seem to know much more. There's talk about involving the parents more in the planning. Alas, that should have been done simultaneously with the efforts to improve conditions at Willowbrook.