

Surpin pointed out that through a transfer of more than 200 residents to Island View, the state agency will be able to show statistically that it has reduced the resident population at Willowbrook and improved the resident-staff ratio while, at the same time, be financially responsible for fewer residents.

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Gavin added that the shift would merely allow the Willowbrook administration to carry out mandated changes more easily. He spoke specifically about renovation work proposed for certain buildings at Willowbrook.

"By transferring a group of patients to Island View, they won't have to worry about what to do with them while they renovate the building they were in — it will be empty," he argued.

He theorized other residents could then be shifted internally for further renovations.

"If they need a swing building, the state agency should have leased 1000 Targee St. on a short-term basis and delicately carried out temporary transfers," Gavin said, "instead of allowing a private interest to make a profit derived from tax dollars."

Fogel, however, was adamant that his negotiations with the state were properly carried out and carefully monitored by state and Willowbrook officials. Since the concept of providing nursing home care and special therapy for adult mentally retarded is new, he said, a new procedure was necessary.

Fogel and Dr. Ristich noted that a detailed "working agreement" has been signed which sets down guidelines for care programs at Island View, allows Willowbrook to provide

expertise in training programs and establishes that the state mental hygiene agency can monitor and inspect the facilities and programs once the operation is begun.

"We have 800 residents who need extended nursing care which we cannot presently provide," Dr. Ristich said. "This will give us the chance to allow some of them to receive it."

Fogel, who operates a 520-bed nursing home in Manhattan, said the center will have more than 200 doctors, nurses, social workers and specialized therapists — enough to provide a resident-staff ration of about 5 to 1 at any given time, much better than that afforded at Willowbrook.

Under the agreement, the staff will be given an orientation program by Willowbrook officials, and certain minimum care provision requirements have been set down.

In the case of a medical emergency, he said, Willowbrook has agreed to insure that a patient is admitted to a hospital (likely the U.S. Public Health Service facility in Clifton) if he is refused by an "accredited hospital of this area."

Fogel said the care provided will be personalized for each patient and will give those transferred a chance "to begin a new life."

Gavin disagreed, saying that while good medical care will undoubtedly be provided, residents placed in the care center will have "no hope of ever rising from the level Willowbrook has brought them to."

"They will be moved there by Willowbrook and forgotten — they'll be left to die," he charged.

He pointed out that one of the mandates faced by Willowbrook is a pledge to return discharged residents "to their home borough." He said that of the 800 residents in need of medical care, only 54 are Islanders. Thus, he said, most of those sent to Island View will not be being returned to their home boroughs as mandated.

Dr. Ristich agreed but argued that is insignificant since they will be receiving better care at the Concord facility.

Gavin also took issue with the "training program" to be provided for the Island View staff by Willowbrook, noting that the agreement specifies only one eight-hour session.

"All they'll do is tell the staff what to expect from the retarded people," he said. "They won't be able to learn anything meaningful. It's just an excuse to justify the move."

The extent of the care to be provided at Island View will likely be closely reviewed by the city when Fogel presents his proposal this week in an effort to arrange for the transfer of Willowbrook patients by insuring Social Services funding.