

Willowbrook gets management expert

By ROBERT MIRALDI

The new temporary director of Willowbrook Developmental Center, James A. Forde, is a 19-year specialist in public administration who will be looking to shape up the management of the controversial state institution for mentally retarded.

Forde, a native New Yorker, was named yesterday to succeed Dr. Miodrag Ristich, who was transferred Wednesday to the Institute for Basic Research on Mental Retardation, Willowbrook.

Dr. Ristich will be a clinical research scientist in a \$2.5-million federally funded project designed to develop computerized medical record systems for the mentally retarded.

Forde will assume his new duties Monday or Tuesday and will bring with him a team of two or three senior officials of the state Department of Mental Hygiene. The new team will remain at Willowbrook for three months until a permanent successor for Dr. Ristich is chosen.

The 47-year-old Forde is the first black director to be appointed at Willowbrook.

Yesterday Forde met with representatives from five groups concerned with the future of Willowbrook, along with two officials from the Department of Mental Hygiene.

The meeting was to bring Forde up to date about Willowbrook and its myriad of problems. According to Harold Wolfe, communications director for the state agency, Forde has been to Willowbrook "a number of times" and is familiar with its problems.

When Forde begins to tackle the management problems of the institution, helping him improve efficiency and employ output will be the management

consulting firm of Griffenhagen-Kroeger, Inc., of San Francisco.

It is expected that the new moves at Willowbrook will bring some order to what has been described as an "uncoordinated, mismanaged" institution.

"Forde and his aides, with the management consulting firm," Wolfe said, "will certainly be looking closely at how effectively the manpower available at Willowbrook is used.

"He will be taking a close look to see if the people there are doing the work they are being paid to do," Wolfe added.

Griffenhagen-Kroeger is now completing a three-month study on the top management needs in the state department.

"Before we can implement any effective programs," Dr. Stuart Keill, city regional director, said yesterday, "we have to get the management under control."

Dr. Keill said that as an "outsider," Forde will have an advantage. "He can step back as a disinterested observer," Wolfe said, "and look objectively at the center's programs."

Forde is presently director of the Mid-Hudson Regional Office

of the Department of Mental Hygiene. He has been director at the Poughkeepsie, N.Y., facility since May 1.

Dr. Alan D. Miller, state commissioner, said yesterday that he knew of "no task that is more difficult, challenging or draining than transforming a large, basically custodial institution for the mentally retarded into a program that provides human, safe and effective care."

Dr. Ristich, he said, "has made a significant start in that direction and for that accomplishment he is to be commended and thanked."

Miller said a change in administration will help accelerate further improvements.

Wolfe added that "the need for improved management at all levels is the major problem at Willowbrook today."

Described as a tireless worker with "unlimited energy," Forde has a master's degree in public administration from the City University of New York and has completed his doctoral credits in the field at New York University.

He has served the Department of Mental Hygiene as director of budget services,

director of management services and associate commissioner for local services.

Attending yesterday's meeting with Forde were Dr. Keill; Dr. William Nadel, special assistant to the commissioner; Alton Marshall, president of the state development disabilities committee; Robert Schonhorn, director of the United Cerebral Palsy Association; Elliot Aronin, executive director of the state Association for Retarded Children; Peter McDermott of the Board of Visitors, and representatives of the Willowbrook Benevolent Society.