

Probe goes on in boy's death

By SUSAN FRY

Police are continuing the investigation into the death of an 18-year-old Willowbrook Developmental Center resident who was found late last Friday night on the floor beside his bed in Building 8.

A detective said yesterday that police intend to question again Willowbrook staff members who were on duty at the time of death, about 11 p.m.

One interim report from the medical examiner indicated the boy, who was identified as Jaime Rivera, had sustained a brain injury with several deep lacerations. However, a statement released by Willowbrook officials last night reported the medical examiner said death was due to a fracture at the base of the skull. The Advance was not able to reach the medical examiner.

Earlier this week the interim director of the institution, James A. Forde, and police said that the boy's death was apparently accidental, based on separate preliminary investigations.

However, the family of the dead boy said yesterday through a spokesman that they "have reason to believe the death was not accidental."

The spokesman said that after family members met Wednesday with ward aides who were reportedly on duty when Rivera died and examined statements made to a supervisor, they found conflicting information about the time of death and its official disclosure and the whereabouts of the attendants when the boy died.

Although Rivera was allegedly known to be a "jumper," or one who tosses about violently in bed, his family maintains he was "quiet, reserved and non-antagonistic."

Last night Willowbrook officials released the following statement:

"On Friday, Oct. 11, residents of D ward in Building 8 at Willowbrook returned from a movie about 10:15 p.m. That night four aides were working with 36 residents on the ward. One aide who was in the dormitory area states that she saw Jaime Riviera in his bed as she went to the back of the ward to quiet down another resident.

"While she was putting him

in bed, her back was turned to much of the ward. About five minutes later, she found Jaime Rivera lying on his back between two beds, motionless. She immediately called for the nurse in the building.

"The doctor arrived five to 10 minutes later and pronounced him dead. The building team leader and a deputy director arrived later that same evening to talk with employees. An incident report was filed and an investigation was initiated that night.

"Statements given during our investigation lead us to believe that the head injury was due to an accidental fall. The preliminary report from the medical examiner's office is that Jaime Rivera sustained a fracture at the base of his skull.

"An injury to this vulnerable spot generally causes damage to vital centers in the brain and a hemorrhage. We are currently awaiting the final report of the medical examiner and the results of the police inquiry."