

Funds for Willowbrook wait for plan of action

The state Department of Mental Hygiene has committed \$200,000 for the first three months of next year to the development of community services for Willowbrook who are being placed in community facilities, according to the institution's acting director.

James A. Forde, who has been assigned to Willowbrook for a three-month interim period, said the funds will be available if "suitable" plans are developed by the city Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services, voluntary agencies and Willowbrook.

A full annual commitment could amount to nearly \$1 million for the fiscal year beginning next April, he added.

"It is my feeling that if local

government and voluntary agencies are responsive to the development of community services for this group, the (state) Legislature will vote additional funds during the next session," Ford explained.

The Legislature passed a law earlier this year which provides for 100 per cent state funding of mental health and social services rendered by community agencies to persons who have been in state facilities for five years or more.

The use of the state money is contingent upon development of appropriate plans by local government and voluntary agencies. The funds can be used only by city agencies or by voluntary agencies contracted with the city.

"Since 90 per cent of Willowbrook residents are

eligible for this program, I am obviously very much interested in how this money is used," Forde said.

He added that his staff will begin discussions with city agencies to develop "more detailed and specific planning that would take place through the normal city planning procedures."

Although the commissioner of the city department was not available for comment yesterday, a spokesman said the agency is "willing to cooperate" with the state to provide necessary services.

The intent of the new law is to increase state and city services in cooperation to provide adequate and appropriate services to persons discharged from a state facility to relieve communities of the financial burden.