

# Willowbrook study aims at specifics

By SUSAN FRY

An independent study of the Willowbrook Developmental Center was initiated last week to analyze and implement specific action in solving the institution's controversial management problems.

Retained by New York State, the management-consultant firm of Griffenhagen-Kroeger has developed a six-month work outline to provide the center

with improved programs in six support units.

The study commences with the arrival of acting director, James A. Forde, who three weeks ago replaced Dr. Miodrag Ristich, and in the middle of a federal court case in which treatment of Willowbrook residents is being challenged.

Included in the review will be the supply system (budget requests and purchasing procedures); plant engineering and maintenance; housekeeping; vehicle operations and maintenance; laundry and food service. A sixth function, the building teams operation, will also require review.

The building teams are responsible for resident care which draws upon the support services.

Griffenhagen-Kroeger, with offices in Manhattan and headquarters in San Francisco, will undertake a four-phase effort including "problem identification, functional and operational analysis, program improvement plan development and program implementation."

The two-week identification phase, now under way, involves

citing problem areas in a general sense and identifying specific management improvements.

Under a two-month timetable, the second phase is a detailed assessment of support service areas including the nature and amount of such services demanded by clinical programs; manpower productivity and scheduling; information processes and personnel administration in the areas of supervisory roles, employee performance evaluations, training and labor relations.

The third two-month segment will formulate recommendations or alternatives to improve internal operations and staff, and subject to the Willowbrook director's approval, those recommendations will be implemented in the final three-month period.

The management firm is expected to provide six experts during the study and the implementation of recommendations.

Griffenhagen-Kroeger is headed by former Deputy Mayor Edward K. Hamilton, who was known during the

Lindsay administration as an expert in increasing productivity of large city agencies. He was particularly noted for his uncanny ability to grasp bureaucratic complexities.

The firm has been retained by the state in a contract of over \$55,000 (the cost of the Willowbrook study has not been released) to study, in addition to Willowbrook, the performance of the top and middle-management of the state Department of Mental Hygiene, which spends about a billion mental health dollars a year.

Many of the Willowbrook problems involving mistreatment of the institution's residents, publicly exposed over two years ago, has been due to what investigative experts call poor management.

During federal court proceedings earlier this month and last week, it was learned that communication between direct care staff (ward aids, therapists, and others), middle-management, top management and support services have broken down, resulting in the inadequate care of residents.

To some observers those problems arose because of the mammoth size of Willowbrook; poor or too few training programs for staff; indifference on the part of directors and high level officials and the incompetence of the state department.

On the state level, Griffenhagen-Kroeger is expected to concentrate on the relationship and lines of authority between the central administration and eight regional offices that were established early this year.

Ford has also been noted as a management expert and during his three-month stay at Willowbrook, is expected to work closely with the consultants.

He is currently director to the Mental Hygiene Department's Mid-Hudson region and is a former associate commissioner for all its psychiatric and developmental centers.