

# 2 in running to direct Willowbrook

By ROBERT MIRALDI

The choice for the next director of Willowbrook Developmental Center has been narrowed to two, the Advance has learned. Significantly, both choices are long-time administrators in the mental health field.

An eight-member search committee has sent two names—Theodore F. Childs, a professor at Long Island University, and Harold F. Piepembrink, superintendent of a Chicago state institution—to the commissioner of the state Department of Mental Hygiene.

Commissioner Alan D. Miller confirmed through a spokesman that he had received those two names, with "highest recommendations," from the search committee.

Commissioner Miller, however, will be resigning his post as of Jan 6. It is expected that the next commissioner will make the appointment shortly after he takes office.

Governor-elect Carey has made no indication yet when he will decide or who his choice will be for the next commissioner of the Department of Mental Hygiene (DMH).

James A. Forde, the present acting director of Willowbrook, will be returning to his post as Mid-Hudson regional director for DMH around Jan. 15. He came to Willowbrook on an interim basis when Dr. Miodrag Ristic, former director, was transferred.

According to chairman Peter Kohler, who is also mental retardation chief for New York City, the committee has met five times since November. Kohler said he was "esthetic" about the applications received for the Willowbrook directorship.

Kohler, responding to a question, confirmed the name of Piepembrink as one of those highly recommended for the job. However, saying it would be "unfair to go into elaborate detail...at this

stage." Kohler refused to reveal the other name.

"We have made recommendations strongly in favor of two individuals," Kohler said in a telephone interview, "with a third being mentioned."

Conversations with high-ranking officials in the DMH elicited the names of Childs and David Rosen, an administrator for a Detroit, Mich., facility for the mentally retarded, as the committee's other two choices.

A spokesman for Commissioner Miller confirmed that all three names—Childs, Rosen and Piepembrink—were submitted.

Childs, 53, is a professor of health sciences at Long Island University's Brooklyn campus. He teaches two basic science courses and oversees LIU's developmental disability program.

According to one DMH official, Childs has the "inside track" for the job. He has worked at the Willowbrook campus where 20 LIU students work in a master's program as physical therapists.

Childs has a master's degree from Columbia University. He has completed his degree requirements for a doctorate and will receive that degree shortly, he says.

"I want this job," Childs told the Advance from his Westbury, L.I., home. "I want it very bad."

Piepembrink is superintendent of Tinley Park Mental Health Center, Chicago, a state-run institution. The hospital's jurisdiction is the south side of Chicago.

Piepenbrink has been an administrator of state-run facilities for 23 years. Childs worked for 17 years as an administrator at a veterans' hospital.

Kohler called the committee's two choices "exceedingly strong in institutional management." He said that both men wanted 24-hour access to the Willowbrook campus.

"Both men we recommended wanted the job," Kohler said. "They were not just here for an interview."

The committee received about 40 applications, all of which were considered qualified. There were no applications from women, and only one from a doctor.

The director's job pays about \$43,000.

The members of the search committee were: Anthony Pinto, Willowbrook Benevolent Society; Robert Schonhorn, United Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State; Peter McDermott, Willowbrook Board of Visitors; Thomas Coughlin, mental retardation advisory committee; Tom McCarley, state Association for Retarded Citizens; Mrs. Beatrice Victor; Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council; Elliot Aronin, Association for Retarded Children, and Ronnie Smith of the Willowbrook CSEA.