

Management survey itemizes Willowbrook ills

Food service a prime target

By ROBERT MIRALDI

The management consulting firm hired by the state Department of Mental Hygiene four months ago to shape up Willowbrook Developmental Center has found support services — including food service — at the institution woefully inadequate.

In two separate reports, totalling 177 pages, Griffenhagen-Kroeger Inc., a San Francisco-based management firm, makes a seven-pronged criticism and analysis of Willowbrook's services and recommends sweeping changes.

The Griffenhagen-Kroeger (G-K) staffers found in virtually all areas examined that support services do not meet the institution's needs, productivity could be improved, inoperative equipment could be utilized, and coordination between inter-related departments is minimal.

The firm is now continuing work at Willowbrook and has set a goal of 15 weeks to implement the changes that it and the Department of Mental Hygiene feel will improve the level of care at the long-troubled, allegedly mismanaged institution.

Acting Director James A. Forde said that the G-K staffers have "identified many of the problem areas and some of our suspicions have been confirmed. Their proposed methods for improvement will be helpful."

The two reports, replete with charts, graphs and statistics, were released last week and will probably be among the first documents that Harold F. Piepenbrink, an Illi-

nois mental health management expert, will read when he becomes the new director.

The official announcement on Piepenbrink is expected to come tomorrow or Wednesday, according to Mental Hygiene sources.

Piepenbrink's predecessor, Dr. Miodrag Ristic, who left Willowbrook in October, was criticized during his two-year tenure for a lack of management ability. When Ristic left, denying the charges, the department brought in the G-K firm to attack Willowbrook's management and organization problems.

One of the most vital areas of service for Willowbrook residents—food service—was perhaps the target of the report's severest deficiency finding.

In its 66-page report issued Jan. 30, G-K said that "regular production and distribution of correct food quantities and diets to the...resident population...is not occurring."

Residents do not receive the correct quantities of food; modified and special diet servings are frequently not received, the report said.

Parent groups at Willowbrook have long charged that insufficient and incorrect portions are served to children. "It's nothing we haven't known for years," Anthony Pinto, president of the Willowbrook Benevolent Society, said in a recent interview.

"They are more aware of the problem today, but they haven't done a lot to resolve it," Pinto said. He conceded that food service is better today than five, or even two,

years ago.

Pinto said, however, that the service is still deplorable, citing cold food served to many residents, improper diets and a 55-day time lag for getting special diet needs resolved.

Forde said that some of the data analyzed by G-K "was a product of old information. Some problems have been alleviated," he said, since the report was completed.

Forde agreed that some of the problems identified by G-K resulted from a lack of clear policy from top-level administration officials, but, he said, the major reorganization of Willowbrook—so-called geographic unitization—in the past two years has not allowed an inter-departmental communication system to develop.

"You can't change one part of the body without touching another," Forde said.

Lack of communication in Willowbrook's meal distribution system, and lack of follow-up care, the report said, has caused much of the food mismanagement. Communication between kitchens and resident buildings "is resulting in the serving of the wrong diet to approximately 30 per cent of all residents."

Virtually none of the center's 520 residents requiring double portions receive them, the report said.

Deputy Director Donald E. Fleming says that "since Nov. 11, 1974, we have been receiving sufficient quantities of food to include those residents who are receiving double portions."