

*Our opinion*

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE.

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# Tighter rules for adult homes

By this summer, with the opening of three more adult care homes by private operators, Staten Island will have far more such facilities than the entire borough of Brooklyn.

Right now, there are 773 beds provided in five profit-making "domiciliary care facilities," as they are called. The 300-bed Island Manor in Mariners Harbor is to open very shortly. And by summer two others, one in New Brighton and the other in Fort Wadsworth, are due to begin operating.

Recently figures released by the state Board of Social Welfare revealed that in three such homes on the Island the proportion of former mental patients residing in them is 61 per cent — almost two of every three. But just last Friday Dr. Alvin M. Mesnikoff, director of the South Beach Psychiatric Center, declared that the state has not properly regulated the housing of chronic mentally ill people into unwilling and unprepared communities.

The doctor said there should be a 30 per cent ceiling on the number of such patients permitted in any such residential home — half as many as the state's own figures revealed.

He also said that mental health rehabilitation should be separate from domiciliary care, that communities where such facilities are located be allowed to make their views known through community boards, and that stricter inspections of such homes be conducted.

Already there is only limited psychiatric after-care service available to people resident in such homes here, and the addition of people who may need that service and hospitalization is adding to the already heavy burden of our Island's medical facilities.

Dr. Robert Reich, director of psychiatric services for the city's Department of Social Services, has charged that the Board of Social Welfare's regulation of adult care homes is totally inadequate, that it has failed to set adequate standards or to rigidly enforce its rules.

A moratorium on further construction of the homes on the Island is currently in force, but it's essential that it be continued for quite awhile — until the standards are set much higher and the community is given an adequate voice in the decisions.