

# Willowbrook suspends attendant named in beating probe

The Willowbrook Developmental Center has suspended an attendant who may have beaten a 9-year-old patient in a shower. The boy later died and his body was exhumed yesterday for a court-ordered autopsy.

A spokesman for the institution for the mentally retarded said the aide was suspended "on the basis of allegations of potential negligence and misconduct. This action was based on statements given to the police by Willowbrook employes."

Another employe reportedly told police she was in the ward last Tuesday night and heard screams from the shower. She went there and observed an attendant beating the child, it was reported.

A Willowbrook spokesman said officials there were initially unaware of the alleged beating, believing the child suffered heart failure. The boy, Kyle Smith, had a history of heart trouble.

Reports of the beating did not become known until Saturday, a few hours after the child was buried in an upstate cemetery.

Detectives hoped to learn the results of the autopsy today.

The body was exhumed yesterday, pursuant to a court order obtained by the district attorney's office, and removed to the medical examiner's office in Manhattan.

Detective Robert Dianora of the crimes against persons squad and Detective Raymond R. Christy of the district attorney's squad were present when the boy's body was removed from its grave at Mount Hope Cemetery, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y.

The boy was buried Saturday after his parents reportedly refused to give their consent to a then routine request for an autopsy, believing their child had died of natural causes.

The boy died last Tuesday, with a doctor at the center listing the cause of death as a cerebral hemorrhage. It was the doctor who had asked the parents for permission to perform the autopsy.

However, the district attorney's office and police subsequently came upon information which indicated that the boy may not have died of natural causes. This led the district attorney's office to obtain an exhumation order from Supreme Court Justice Vito J. Titone earlier yesterday.

In an affidavit submitted in support of the exhumation application, Chief Assistant District Attorney Thomas R. Sullivan said he received information that the boy suffered injuries to his "head, body and limbs...which would indicate that the cause of death is not from natural causes..."

Young Kyle, who suffered Down's Syndrome, usually referred to as mongolism, had been a resident of the center since he was a year old. He was said to have had a history of heart trouble.

Police said the boy failed to respond to first aid, including oxygen, after he turned blue and collapsed while being given a shower. Earlier he had been swimming in a pool in Building 26.

The center and police carried out inquiries into the death at that time and concluded that death was due to natural causes.

Later in the week, however, a center employe reportedly informed the district attorney's office that another employe had hurled or pounded the child against the wall while giving him the shower.