

Parent participation urged at Willowbrook

Parents of residents of Willowbrook Developmental Center were urged to become involved in assuring the proper care of their children during a meeting of the Willowbrook Chapter of the Benvolent Society last night in the center.

"It is essential that we, the parents, participate," Anthony Pinto, president of the society, said. "We've come a long way but we can go much further."

Since the consent decree earlier this year, he explained, there is now a review board and parents may also participate in several committees.

Pinto urged the parents to participate in a committee on living conditions at the center and another concerning the placement and counseling of the residents.

"We are trying to get interest on the part of parents. We do need a commitment," he said.

Pinto also urged those present to contact other parents that they know and try to involve them in making sure the center lives up to the consent decree.

Earlier in the meeting, Miss Linda Carelli, director of community placement at the

center, explained the criteria used by the center for placing residents in the community.

She explained that a recent ruling by the state Department of Mental Hygiene allows families who opt to bring a child over 21 home will receive the same money as persons in the foster care program.

Miss Carelli explained that parents would normally not support over the age of 21, but a handicapped person would need the support.

Parents who bring children under 21 home, she said, do not receive, presently, the

same benefits. (Foster parents receive \$263 a month for the child, who also receives a \$17 allowance.)

Parents are notified early that their child is being considered for placement in the community, Miss Carelli added, and may initiate a study of such placement if they wish the child to be in the community.

Mrs. Catherine Syms, a team leader in Building 29, where only Island residents are housed, explained some of the problems in the building and said that she has requested that more staff be added,

but that at the present time no action has been taken by the state.