

The report clearly rejects the current state format whereby placement is done through five separate community service units operating at Willowbrook. The borough retardation office, the report says, must be a separate entity.

The panel predicts "rapid and sustained growth in a wide range of community alternatives," but fears that growth would be "inhibited" if the local retardation office was "structurally dependent" on the developmental center.

A vital function of the borough retardation office would be an "aggressive and energetic" education program directed towards the Staten Island community, the report says.

As a community of predominantly homeowners, the report says, "it can be projected that an intensive community education program will be needed to gain community acceptance...of facilities for the retarded."

The "total involvement of the larger community is an absolute necessity if future dilemmas (like Willowbrook) are to be avoided," the report says, adding that the borough office would have to be "highly visible."

Observers agree that the Department of Mental Hygiene bungled the implementation and public relations surrounding the development of the Tysen St. group home which met significant community opposition.

## Dispersal

Upset by the dehumanizing conditions at Willowbrook Developmental Center in 1972, parents and state retardation groups went into federal court and demanded changes, claiming that the constitutional rights of Willowbrook's 5,431 residents were being denied.

A devastating emotion-filled three-year court battle ensued and finally on April 25, 1975, the state agreed to a consent decree which outlined radical changes and the dismantling of Willowbrook.

Where are the 5,431 residents of Willowbrook who were the subjects of the court case?

As the Willowbrook Review Panel's community placement plan points out, the "class" has been dispersed all over the metropolitan area. Until the Review Panel asked, in fact, no one in the Department of Mental Hygiene was quite sure where the "class" had gone.

Before planning community placement, the panel felt, it had to know the characteristics of the former and present retarded residents.

Upon compiling the data, it found out that 318 have died and that 274 have been discharged; that 370 are receiving family care and that 242 live in the community and receive outpatient care. Developmental centers house 4,137 residents, including 2,650 at Willowbrook.

Approximately two thirds of the "class" members are now adults and, thus, the panel knows it must plan to place more adults than children, a large majority who are severely retarded.

Still needed, the panel says, is an analysis of the specific needs of the residents of each borough so that adequate planning can be done on a local basis.

—ROBERT MIRALDI