

## Checks to provide more patient care

The state Department of Mental Hygiene handed out three checks yesterday, which might not seem like a big deal for an agency which has a budget reaching into the millions.

The checks were special, however, because they represent the culmination of a new purchase of service contract mechanism which will allow private agencies to provide care for residents of Willowbrook Developmental Center.

Previously, a complex funding system which funnelled the money through a city mental health bureaucracy was in effect. The new system, Mental Hygiene Commissioner Lawrence C. Kolb said at a Manhattan press conference, "cracks the bureaucratic armor."

With Deputy Commissioner Thomas Coughlin and Regional Director Alvin Mesnikoff standing by, Kolb handed out three checks to representatives of voluntary agencies. Eventually 16 checks, totaling \$200,000 will be dispersed.

The new system is particularly significant for Willowbrook, which must reduce its population to 250 by 1981 under a federal court order. The speeded-up process will allow for quicker community placement of residents.

Voluntary agency representatives were gleeful in accepting the checks yesterday. Kolb said he hopes the new contract

mechanism would "become a normal, everyday type of thing."

The three checks handed out yesterday will help provide service for about 70 Willowbrook residents, Kolb said.

The commissioner would not say if the state had met the court-mandated deadline of 200 community placements which had to be made by today. "We have a date in court next Friday," Kolb said in response to a question.

The Department of Mental Hygiene is slated to appear before U.S. District Court Judge Orrin G. Judd next Friday in Brooklyn. The purpose of the hearing is to see if the court has met the 200 placement deadline.

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