

# Schenectady man may be the next Willowbrook head

By ROBERT MIRALDI

A 40-year-old, eight-year employe of the state Department of Mental Hygiene, with a strong background in education and the development of community-based programs for the retarded, is the top choice to become the new director of Willowbrook Developmental Center.

Officials of the Department of Mental Hygiene have confirmed that Dr. Levester Cannon, deputy director of the department's Mid-Hudson Regional Office, is the front runner for the \$43,000-a-year job.

"If every advisory board agrees to the choice, he will be the next director," Thomas A. Coughlin, the acting director, said yesterday. "I think he can do the job."

Dr. Cannon, who lives in Schenectady, N.Y., was unavailable for comment yesterday, but his boss in the Mid-Hudson office, James A. Forde, called him an "excellent choice" and said he will "be one of the top directors in the field."

Dr. Cannon is chosen to succeed Harold C. Piepenbrink, who was forced to resign because of illness, it will mark a distinct change of approach for the Department of Mental Hygiene.

When Piepenbrink was chosen for the director's post in March 1975, it was reportedly because Commissioner Lawrence C. Kolb was seeking a top-flight administrator who could solve the management woes of the 2,400-bed institution. Piepenbrink came from Illinois with a reputation as a management specialist.

Dr. Cannon, however, has had no experience in running an institution and has a doctoral degree in education. His main attribute, officials indicate, is a knowledge of the state system and an ability to relate to parent groups.

Coughlin said Dr. Cannon is "community oriented, a strong administrator and a mental retardation specialist." He added, that Dr. Cannon's choice was not a fait accompli.

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