

## 'Unique' missing patient returns to Willowbrook

By MAARK LINSALATA

A 19-year-old resident of Willowbrook Developmental Center, who was reported missing early Saturday, returned on her own Sunday—and then left again to visit friends in a different borough.

The woman, Miss Patricia Murphy, is considered a "unique" case by Dr. Levester Cannon, director of the center.

Miss Frances Ryan, deputy director for treatment services, said the woman is permitted "to come and go more or less as she pleases."

However, she is expected to notify the center of her whereabouts if she is going to be away more than 24 hours. Miss Murphy's freedom comes from being a voluntary patient in the institution and one of nearly average intelligence, Miss Ryan said. She does need additional psychiatric care for behavioral problems the administrator added.

When she had been missing 32 hours last week, officials called police. Apparently, Miss Ryan said, the woman, who is said to be able to conduct herself well outside of the institution, "forgot" to call in and tell administrators where she could be located.

Under rules set up after a patient was found frozen to death on the center's grounds last year, a missing patient must be sought within 24 hours after their absence has first been noted. Police must be told, relatives called, and the grounds searched.

"The policy is followed through with very few exceptions and Patricia Murphy is one of them," Miss Ryan said.

A "limited search" is conducted when Miss Murphy is found to be missing. That differs from an ordinary one only in that the grounds aren't searched.

This exception is because Miss Murphy "would not be lost on the grounds; she's not helpless," Miss Ryan said.

When asked why the police had not

been notified after 24 hours, instead of waiting an extra eight hours last week, Dr. Cannon replied, "I don't know."

One reason might be because it would be "a little bit degrading" for her to be brought back by police, Miss Ryan indicated.

The woman has been institutionalized since she was five or six years old, Miss Ryan said. And she added that Miss Murphy's presence in the center may be "inappropriate."

She can read, write, and follow directions. And, according to Miss Ryan, the woman is "very self-sufficient."

Miss Ryan said the center has arranged to have the woman released to a hostel in Manhattan. That placement only needs the approval of Miss Murphy herself, Miss Ryan said.