

Such a program of aid to parents of non-institutionalized children has been employed in the state of Michigan for the past 3 years. Unlike the monthly stipend which natural and foster parents receive under New York's present program, no direct advancement is made to parents.

David Rosen, director of the Oakland-MacCombs Regional Office of Mental Retardation in Michigan, and a member of the Willowbrook Review Panel, explains how that program works.

"What we do is admit the family to our family-care caseload. Then we provide funds for a trainer to come into the home and work with the client, thus freeing the parents to have more time for their other children, take parttime employment, or just have a few hours reprieve from the overwhelming task of caring for a handicapped child. We keep the family on our caseload and our case managers continue to check on the situations, seeing that programs are appropriate and making changes where necessary."

In addition to providing specially trained homemakers, the Michigan program allows an individual contract to be drawn up for each family, wherein funds are appropriated for specific services: i.e., therapy, prosthetic devices, wheelchairs and even home modifications.

Even though Bill finally got his city job a couple of years ago, the family is just about making ends meet. They can't afford to have a ramp put in so Marcy can get around more easily in her wheelcahir and, despite hospitalization benefits that have minimized medical bills, there is still part of the cost of wheelchairs and braces to be absorbed by the family, not to mention the cost of having to provide diapers for their partially toilet-trained daughter.

Bill makes \$100 too much a year to qualify for Supplemental Security Income and the family is also ineligible for food stamps.

"Okay, nobody said, 'have six children,' but nobody said, 'have a handicapped child, either,'" says Ann of some people's insensitivity to her family's plight.

Though she's appreciative of homemaker service that she has been allowed under a special state program, she doesn't feel that the 12 hours a week it provides are enough. "When they first started last year, they gave us 20 hours of help; now we're down to 12. It's a help, but, if I had extra money, I could hire someone to work with her longer."

Miss Hoffman and others have cited the task of determining eligibility as a major stumbling block to the implementation of a funding program such as Michigan's here, but the state might pattern its criteria on that very same model. Rosen explains that his program admits clients who have been adjudged "institution eligible" and whose parents' financial picture meets the terms of a means test normally administered before institutionalization.

Reflecting on such a program's future in our state, Rosen observes that "It would be a good fiscal move since it would cut the cost of institutionalization. It would also be invaluable in keeping kids out of institutions in the first place, by making it easier for their parents to keep them at home."