



A trainee in Willowbrook's Building 76 'family style' eating program serves himself at dinner

## Retarded children profit by 'family style' meals

This week, nine children in Willowbrook's Building 76 will join a family-style eating program that may eventually enable them to serve themselves and eat without assistance.

Edwin Brautman, psychologist for the Building's programs, said the goal was to "try and get each child (in the building) fed in a socially acceptable manner."

Children in the program learn to cut their own food and to eat from plates with real utensils. They learn to serve themselves from bowls and platters.

Prior to family style training, they were given diced food which they ate with plastic spoons from cafeteria-style, partitioned trays.

So far, 19 of the Building's 95 residents have been trained to eat "family style"

The program was begun in December, 1975.

"We started with the best kids. One learned in less than two weeks," Mr. Brautman said.

The children in the program do not speak. Most are severely retarded intellectually, with a somewhat higher functional level in adaptive behavior, Mr. Brautman explained.

Paid for by Building funds, the program provides a ratio of four staff members to each seven children. The training is provided by occupational therapists and the ward staff.