

not giving him a chance. He assumes people don't like him and becomes defensive so that he won't feel so hurt when they reject him."

Those who know and work with the 37-year-old at the United Cerebral Palsy Workshop in Port Richmond, describe him as "amazingly bright," citing his ability to work with tools and intricate machinery as examples of his well-developed motor skills.

But, like the caseworker, they characterize him as "withdrawn" and "suspicious," able to communicate well, but generally unwilling to establish a rapport with others.

Most concede that John's seeming anti-social behavior is a result of emotional deprivation caused by years spent in the institutional setting.

"Once assured that people like him, John can be a warm, giving, sensitive person," the caseworker reveals. "He just needs that assurance that people accept him.

"What people like John need," he sighs, "is the community experience..."

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What kind of persons make the best foster parents for this older age group?



The foster home placement plan for Willowbrook residents is discussed by, left to right, Esperanza Roberts and Gail Smith, with John L. Sullivan, a counselor.

Andy Cook is asked.

"Most people really," he answers. "Single persons, widows, widowers, couples with children — each in his own way can provide a good setting for the older retarded person."

He speaks of the obvious material qualifications that are considered before placement: the physical safety of the house, availability of an extra room etc. and then turns his attention to the personal qualifications of patience, a willingness to allow the newcomer to become a part of the family and the ability to allow him privacy.

"The caretaker should understand the retarded person's limitations, but not treat him as a child. We limit them when we treat them like kids, and some have so much more intelligence than we are aware of," Cook concludes.

Of the 100 older residents the MPU must relocate, 35 are mildly to moderately retarded, meaning they can communicate, have self-help skills, understand simple directions and will perform jobs with supervision.

Most visit sheltered workshops and some even receive pay for the work they do. All are provided with a daily six-hour program (except on weekends)