



The New York Times/Neal Boenzi

A therapist assists a youngster in use of a motor development device

His wife, Genevieve, the current militant president of the Parents Benevolent Association of Willowbrook, said there was up to \$400,000 a year in food and clothing thievery. "There aren't programs as they claim there are," she charged.

There's other discontent. Willowbrook has 30 full-time and 25 part-time physicians. About 30 of the group staged a half-hour protest Wednesday, and then 10 met for two hours with Dr. Cannon over grievances.

They complained of interference by nonphysicians in medical matters, which Dr. Cannon, whose doctorate is in education, disputed. The post of medical director, vacant since August, is being discussed with a voluntary hospital physician.

Jerome W. Isaacs, one of the original plaintiff parents, contended "until there is a separate [New York State] Department of Mental Retardation, with employees taught from the start that these kids can be helped, improvement in the various institutions will not occur."

Jesus Rios, another plaintiff parent, said that "they have tried to improve," but that his son was learning to manage better since his transfer to a group home last November. Rose Regent said her sister, moved to a foster home last October, "is now living like a human being with a wonderful person."

Decentralization Praised

The court-required concept of decentralizing from the vast 350-acre complex with 27 residence buildings draws praise—for instance, from Sam Babich.

Mr. Babich was exceptional in keeping up with his son at Willowbrook, and since June the son has been living at home in programs that the father said were closely supervised by the State Mental Hygiene Department's metropolitan placement unit.

The Babich family is one of about 100 that is paid \$291 a month for taking relatives back home from Willowbrook. The former residents must attend schools or workshops in a required six-hour daily program.

Mr. Babich's son, who is approaching 32 years of age after 15 years at Willowbrook, has learned to travel each day to a workshop on his own, telephone that he has arrived, buy a meal on his own, make his own tea and cook eggs. He said recently that "being in Willowbrook was a living death."

Frederick Sutton said that his 54-year-old sister, in a group home since last April, now conversed and learned.

Last November, unhappy parents proposed that three top state officials be held in contempt for lagging in carrying out the 1975 agreement. But since then, the wrangling appears to have softened.

A stipulation is being worked on to present to Judge John R. Bartels in Federal District Court in Brooklyn March 10. One aspect would accelerate efforts to find community settings—residences for up to 15 retardates and supporting staff members or placement with families.

Placement Goals Listed

Barbara Blum, the assistant state commissioner of mental hygiene supervising services for the retarded in the

metropolitan area, said the proposed new goal would be to place 50 residents a month up to Oct. 1, and 75 a month for the following six months and 100 a month for the ensuing year.

This would compare with only 28 placed last month. The state agency missed the original deadline for 200 placements in the year ended last March 31, moving only 131 into communities, Mrs. Blum said 224 had been relocated since.

Commissioner Blum said there had been problems of community opposition and difficulties with building codes. But she said that "in every instance, the setting is a better life situation for the individual." The court-appointed Willowbrook review panel said that the quality of placements had been "uniformly good."

The review panel, with Dr. Jennifer L. Howze as executive director, has made six-month reports on the overall court agreement through last December. These have decried "broken promises," charged deficiencies in staffing ratios and complained of delays in individual progress plans for all residents.

Dr. Cannon, who is 41 years old, became Willowbrook director last July, after earlier service there in 1968 when it had 5,600 residents, and in 1974, when complaints were at their height. Five other choices turned down the job first, he said.

"The people involved are good people to work with," he said, in explaining why he took the job. "And now we have money—no facility ever had adequate funding until this judgment.

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