

# Staten Island Advance

Staten Island, N. Y. Monday, November 14, 1977

## Community centers next 'logical step' in state planning for Willowbrook

By SYDNEY FRIEDBERG

Willowbrook Developmental Center, just four years ago the largest institution in the world with 6,300 people, is taking a giant step toward closing down.

By 1981, according to an ambitious state plan, Willowbrook will consist of a 250-bed home for the mentally retarded and three community-based support centers for handicapped Staten Islanders.

Administrators say they are not abandoning the work that still needs to be done "in-house" — for the 1,700 people from the five boroughs still residing at Willowbrook.

But they say their proposal, calling

for a major re-direction of past efforts, necessarily shifts the emphasis to the institution's future as an intermediate-sized facility serving only persons of Island origin.

"The process of normalizing our clients has been a long and tedious effort," the proposal says. "However, we have reached the crossroads of either completing this process or halting the logical progression, and keeping our clients solely dependent upon the institution."

The proposal also states that the next "logical step" in the chain of "normalization" is to place clients out in the community in sheltered-workshops or

other supportive services designed to increase self-independence.

In 1975, in response to a lawsuit that successfully challenged the warehousing care at the massive institution, Willowbrook was mandated by a federal court to begin the arduous task of developing less-restrictive settings for the retarded to live.

Since that time, hundreds of residents have been transferred to group and foster homes, but the development of day-time support services has lagged, mental health providers say.

Under the community services plan that has been disclosed, Willowbrook

(Continued on Page 2)

Page 1 of 2 Pages