

# Developmental centers lag behind court order — Levitt

Only one of 11 developmental centers for the mentally retarded is close to fully complying with a court order mandating improvements in environment, staffing and records, a state audit said today.

In a progress report on implementation of the required changes, state Comptroller Arthur Levitt's auditors found "only the Westchester Developmental Center was close to full compliance with the mandates" of the so-called Willowbrook Consent Judgment.

While emphasizing lack of progress at the other 10 state facilities run by the Department of Mental Hygiene, the audit noted that the DMH has until 1981 to comply with the consent judgment.

But, the auditors said, neither the DMH nor the court-appointed review panel responsible for monitoring compliance had set interim goals, preventing them from systematically gauging

progress.

The comptroller's check at the 11 centers was made between September and December 1976, when auditors visited the centers and reviewed three major categories of the judgment — staffing, records and environment.

They found the 11 centers needed 2,047 additional staff members and almost half the developmental plans reviewed lacked long- and short-term goals, the audit said.

As far as improvements in environment, the auditors found that half the ward bathroom areas lacked privacy and equipment for the handicapped; many wards lacked individual dressers for residents and contained more than eight beds per dormitory; and air conditioning was either not operating or non-existent in 130 wards and 165 had neither rugs nor carpeting as required.

In terms of ward cleanliness, Man-

hattan Developmental Center was probably the worst offender — 11 wards were found unclean at the time of our observations and 10 were not free of odors. Adequate equipment and supplies were on hand to correct this situation," the auditors said.

The consent judgment was the result of a suit brought in March 1972 by the New York State Association for Retarded Children and the parents and guardians of the residents at Willowbrook Developmental Center on Staten Island.

The plaintiffs cited wide-ranging problems regarding housing, staffing and programming. In April 1975, they and the defendants entered into a consent judgment requiring compliance by May 31, 1976.

Because the DMH could not meet that deadline, the judgment was amended in February 1977, giving the centers until April 30, 1981, to comply.