

**Watchdog group: Patients being 'dumped'****Halt sought in Willowbrook transfers**

By SYDNEY FREEDBERG

A group that sparked the state program of transferring mentally retarded people from "warehousing" institutions into smaller community homes now says it wants the deinstitutionalization drive stopped — at least temporarily.

John Bertrand, associate director of the New York State Association for Retarded Children, said yesterday that state officials, who for years fought a policy of community placement and now favor it, are "failing to provide follow-up services and sensible planning in their rush to push people out."

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have been unrealistic. In its attempt to comply with the decree, the department (of Mental Hygiene) is not taking care to provide adequate support services.

"We want a temporary moratorium on the placements," Bertrand added, "until the state allocates proper funding to provide the needed services."

In a Jan. 23 letter to State Sen. Frank

"We went down this road with the mentally ill," Bertrand said, referring to alleged "dumping" of patients from state psychiatric centers into communities ill-equipped to deal with them. "We don't want a repeat performance" with the retarded, he said.

Thomas A. Coughlin, head of the state's Mental Retardation Division, called the association's charge "totally inappropriate" and said the state carefully monitors all placements to make sure proper services are provided.

The Association for Retarded Children, which now operates many out-of-

Padavan, R-Queens, chairman of the Senate's Mental Hygiene and Addiction Control Committee, Joseph T. Weingold, executive director of the Association for Retarded Children, urged a public hearing be held on the subject of a moratorium.

A spokesman for Padavan said the question of alleged "dumping of the retarded by the state" would be addressed at a confirmation hearing Tuesday —

city group homes, is the largest organization representing parents of the handicapped in New York State.

The group is the major plaintiff in a federal court case involving the Willowbrook Developmental Center. It was also a motivating force behind the signing of a 1975 court decree calling for a reduction of Willowbrook's population, then at 6,000 and now at 1,625, to 250 residents by 1981.

In concert with civil liberties groups and Willowbrook's residents, the association brought the court action against then Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller and

when Coughlin's pending appointment as commissioner of the new Office of Mental Retardation will be debated.

Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly of West Brighton, chairman of the Assembly's Mental Health Committee, said she is opposed to a moratorium on such placements, pointing out that if the association is opposed to the timetable mandated by the federal court, "they should go back to the court and have it changed."

Other plaintiffs in the court case — including Christopher Hansen, attorney for the Mental Health Law Project, and Diana M. McCourt, whose daughter was transferred last year from Willowbrook to a group home — expressed "outrage" at the association's apparent change of position.

McCourt and Hansen agreed that the state is moving too slowly in its de-population effort and that a moratorium would destroy the fabric of the court decree.

Bertrand, asked if the association had had a change of heart on the consent decree, said: "You bet we hollered when institutions like Willowbrook were human warehouses. But we didn't ask

others in an attempt to turn around abuse, neglect and the traditionally held belief that retarded people needed only "custodial" treatment.

At the group's prompting, a strict timetable was set for the transfer of Willowbrook residents out of overcrowded wards into a variety of community settings, where disabled individuals, the association had maintained, could achieve their potential.

But now, the association's Bertrand said, "The big push we asked for might

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for dumping."

The Willowbrook Review Panel, the court monitor of the 384-acre institution, responded to what a spokesman called a "completely shocking development" by stating that the panel has audited facilities to which Willowbrook residents are being released and "with few exceptions, the placements are of high quality."

Michael Lottman, one of seven panel members, said his committee would refuse to allow any placement of individuals into community group homes "if there weren't the adequate back-up services to go along."

Coughlin said the state, which has had trouble meeting the quotas for transfers set in court, has moved slowly because it wished to avert a situation where retarded persons would be "dumped" into new homes without the back-up programs to help them grow.

"Sometimes I'm an unwilling partner in this whole thing," Coughlin noted, referring to the times the Association for Retarded Children asked him to account for lingering problems at Willowbrook. "But this time I think ARC's nose is out of joint."