

Carey will go ahead with plan to transfer Willowbrook residents

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ALBANY—Declaring that the “greatest progress is often made in the heat of controversy,” Gov. Carey today pledged to continue the dismantling of Willowbrook Developmental Center and other large state institutions for the mentally retarded.

In his health message to the Legislature, Carey said the Department of Mental Hygiene would proceed with the plan to transfer Willowbrook residents to small community facilities to comply with a 1975 federal court agreement. “There are many obstacles still to overcome in order to ensure competent care in the least restrictive setting, but we can and will succeed,” the governor said.

Responding to charges from parents groups that the state is “dumping” Willowbrook residents in a hasty, poorly financed effort to live up to the court order, Carey asserted the state has provided 100 percent funding for the treatment and social services of residents transferred out of the developmental centers.

Since he signed the 1975 consent judgment, Carey contended, the Depart-

ment of Mental Hygiene has “followed a policy of placing individuals from an institution into a community only when a supervised living arrangement and a full day program are available.”

“We have come a long way as a state and a society in community health,” the governor added. “The greatest progress is often made in the heat of controversy.”

But Carey’s budget for the transfer program has drawn criticism not only from the parents’ groups but also from Thomas A. Coughlin, the deputy Commissioner for mental hygiene. Coughlin said last week that, while the budget would take care of the transferees, it would fail to provide enough for the community facilities to absorb new clients not coming from big institutions.

The New York Association for Retarded Children, the largest parents’ group involved in the 1975 court agreement, has called for a moratorium on all further transfers and may go to court to prevent Carey from moving out some 400 of Willowbrook’s remaining 1,650 residents this year.

Also in his health message, Carey called for measures to tighten the operations of the state’s network of

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