

Panel wants \$\$ to follow ex-psychiatric patients

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The Task Force on the New York City Crisis said yesterday that state funds saved by releasing mental patients to community care should "follow the patient" into the communities, not be re-

turned to the general fund.

The group, composed of the heads of public and private agencies in the "human services" field, urged that authority be given to commissioners of the state Department of Mental Hygiene to transfer such funds, saved by the closing and consolidation of state institutions, into "local assistance."

On Staten Island, the North Richmond Mental Health Center and the South Beach Psychiatric Center have been providing care for those released from state psychiatric centers.

It is possible that as more patients are released from the institutions many will reside in Island adult homes, where the state has reported that as many as 1,500 empty beds exist. Currently 30 percent of the residents of New York State's 407 homes for adults are former patients of state psychiatric hospitals.

The report also said that the city's mental hygiene services have "borne the highest share of expense budget cuts of controllable city tax levy items" during the past three years of fiscal crisis, and added:

"The Task Force has analyzed the status of the city's mental hygiene services...and has concluded that the bottom line of mental hygiene service cuts has been reached...and additional cut...would be devastating."

The task force also urged that allocations by the state for services to discharged patients should be based on "needs assessments and per capita census data" to assure New York City its fair share.

To further increase aid to community agencies caring for the once-institutionalized patients, the report said, the state should change the requirement that funds be allocated only for patients who spent five or more years in state hospitals. The task force suggested the state should cover costs for patients released after two or more years of cumulative stay in the state institutions.