

# Ex-patients of Island center to receive 90G-a-year care

Ten former Staten Island Developmental Center residents were transferred to Flower & Fifth Ave. Hospital yesterday, marking the opening of the most expensive facility for the retarded in New York State and perhaps the country.

Another 11 retarded residents were to be moved today from the Gouverneur unit of Manhattan Developmental Center, where they have lived for the last 14 years, to the East Harlem hospital, today. In all, 160 residents are to move into the hospital, which is operated by New York Medical College.

The college's Mental Retardation Institute MRT which promises to provide intensive services for the profoundly retarded patients, is scheduled to receive a Medicaid reimbursement rate of \$90,000 a patient yearly, three times higher than that granted state institutions.

The transfer from the structurally unsound Gouverneur unit was delayed briefly yesterday when state workers refused to escort their patients to waiting vans. But MRI employees and volunteers quickly stepped in and the transfer was accomplished without incident, according to Tyrone Wong, chief of service at Gouverneur.

The workers, all of whom have been guaranteed jobs at other state institutions, have protested the transfer of care from the state to a private group and maintain that the high Medicaid reimbursement rate is not justified.

The transfer was allowed to begin after the state Hospital Review and Planning Council approved the proposal on May 4 and state Health Department officials — over the objections of some staff members — ruled that the project did not need state Public Health Council approval.

According to Health Department counsel Jerome Levy, the Public Health Council only reviews the establishment of new facilities and since Flower & Fifth Ave. Hospital has operated for 104 years, no action by the council was required. Several staff members, who asked to remain anonymous, argued, however, that a new program was indeed being established and therefore the council should have considered the MRI proposal.

But the staff members said they disagreed with charges by the Civil Service Employees Association that the proposal was approved quickly to provide badly needed revenue for New York Medical College, which was bankrupt when the Archdiocese of New York took it over in January.

"There's no question there was pressure to get this proposal through the hospital council quickly," one staff member said. "But I always had the impression that it was because of the dangerous conditions at Gouverneur and not because of financial considerations."

As a result of the rush to approve the project, the staff member said that a full financial evaluation of the MRI plans was never completed. "A full evaluation will be done once the project is under way and believe me, it will be done," he said.

Dr. Margaret J. Giannini, director of MRI, said that the Flower & Fifth program would offer a full range of services, including medical and recreational therapy, for the residents, who the state concedes have been neglected for years.

The Manhattan hospital, meanwhile, will continue to operate as an acute-care facility at least until the end of the year, but its capacity will be reduced from 400 beds to 208, according to hospital officials. Future plans for the hospital are uncertain, they say. —

—BRUCE ALPERT