



This elderly resident may see nothing else but an institution in her lifetime. But for others, there is hope.

## Costs rise for care of retarded

After a protracted court fight, New York State consented in 1975 to reform the Willowbrook State School for the mentally retarded through staffing and budget increases and employee and resident training programs.

But at the heart of the so-called Willowbrook Consent Decree is the tenet found in the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing all people, regardless of handicap, protection from harm and equality of opportunity.

By signing the order (they were under pressure to do so by the parents of the institution's residents), Gov. Carey and other state officials acknowledged that such equality cannot be achieved at a large institution. Under the decree, state officials promised to dismantle Willowbrook by 1981 by relocating all but 250 profoundly disabled native Islanders to less-restrictive living units in their hometowns.

New York State has succeeded in halving the population of Willowbrook in the past three years — so that 2,200 residents remain today in a much-improved environment. But the placement effort has moved slowly in recent months, partially because of the public's fear of accepting the people for whom it once demanded something better.

Meanwhile, the court order has seen an astounding growth of paperwork and bureaucracy, with new agencies formed to secure the rights of a population so long ignored.

And the cost of institutional care has quadrupled as a result of reform — to about \$35,000 a resident a year.

Willowbrook has a new name now — the Staten Island Developmental Center — to remove the stigma of the past and place emphasis on the institution as a community facility. But anyway one views it, the story of an institution on Staten Island may well be the most expensive in New York State history.