

# Former residents get clinic at Willowbrook

A medical clinic for former residents of the Staten Island Developmental Center is scheduled to open tomorrow on the grounds of the center, it was announced yesterday during a meeting of the Willowbrook Review Panel.

According to Philip Ziring, deputy director of health services at the center, the clinic will provide general medical services to the 80 former developmental center residents who now live in the mid-Island or Community Board 2 district.

Ziring said that in the two years that former center residents have been living in community settings, they have been able to obtain medical care only on a "catch-as-catch-can" basis.

He explained, "Many Island physicians may not have had experience with handicapped patients and may not know exactly how to treat them." He also quoted Medicaid reimbursement rates of about \$4.64 for a routine visit to the doctor and said the rate "doesn't encourage private care."

The clinic has been set up on the first floor of the Institute of Basic Research and will initially be staffed by a physician, social worker and nurse.

Ziring said he plans to add mental health services, dental services and a small pharmacy to the clinic in the next few months.

He also hopes, he said, that the clinic will eventually handle the more than 300

former developmental center residents who now live in the Community Board 1 and 3 areas and also handicapped persons who have never lived in the developmental center.

In a related discussion, the panel clarified, in response to questions by center employees, the procedures by which residents are selected for community placement in group homes.

A woman who works as a physical therapist asked about residents who are repeatedly screened for placement, but are never deemed good candidates for placement.

"This constitutes failure for them," she said. "Can't we do something about that?"

Fran Ryan, director of care-related services, explained that repeated screenings are occasionally warranted in order to select the place next that would best serve the center resident.

She added that residents whose placement is not successful are, whenever possible, placed in another community setting and not brought back to the institution. "Sometimes when a placement hasn't worked out, all we have to do is add more support (training, therapy) services."

A panel member said that at about four percent, the recidivism or return rate of residents to the center, "is about the lowest of any institution in the state."

## Rights for retarded

In 1972 parents with children at the former Willowbrook State School sued New York State in a federal court with hopes of improving conditions at the 6,000-bed institution. One of the plaintiffs in the court suit was Lara Schneps, then a resident at Willowbrook.

The parents' groups eventually received many precedent-setting concessions from the state. Lara Schneps was moved to a group home, but her parents, Vicki and Murray Schneps of Manhattan have continued to fight for the rights of the retarded.

Recently they won more concessions — this time from the owner of an apartment building in Bayside, Queens. The Birchwood Associates had refused to rent an apartment to the Working Organization for Retarded Children (WORC) for three retarded children. Lara Schneps was one of them.

WORC filed a complaint with the state Division for Human Rights and hearings were held in November. The state panel found "the rejection was based on the fact that the tenants were retarded children."

After the finding the parties agreed to a stipulation under which Birchwood did not admit to a violation of the law, but agreed to rent to WORC and allow the retarded children to live there. The stipulation was signed Jan. 2.