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Yvette Adam, a therapist, working with a retarded child at Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospitals

## For the Retarded, Despair Is Lingering

By RONALD SULLIVAN

"They were the most profoundly retarded and severely handicapped patients ever assembled. You could work in this field for 40 years and never see anything like them. They were the hidden cases, the ones that no one ever wanted to see, the victims of years of neglect."

The words poured out slowly from the lips of Dr. Erwin Friedman, the director of the Manhattan Developmental Center, the New York State facility that cares for the mentally disabled and handicapped in Manhattan. He was describing a group of former Willowbrook patients who had been removed from the huge state institution for the retarded on Staten Island under Federal District Court order in 1975.

The 160 patients were originally sent to another state facility in Old Gouverneur, a rundown former municipal hospital in downtown Manhattan that was being condemned at the time as a firetrap.

Last May, they were moved from Gouverneur to a new private rehabilitation facility operated by the New York Medical College in Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospitals. And if a special Willowbrook Review Panel established

by the Federal Court in Brooklyn prevails, the patients will be moved again.

The panel, which was created by the court to make sure that the 5,000 patients who are or were in Willowbrook receive optimal levels of care, contends that the Flower and Fifth Avenue facility, on Fifth Avenue at East 106th Street, continues to violate minimum-care requirements of the court-ordered Willowbrook Consent Decree signed by Governor Carey in 1975.

Last Sunday the panel met to discuss a new deadline for evacuating the remaining 132 patients from Gouverneur, perhaps as soon as September, 18 months earlier than projected. No decision has yet been reached.

In a letter last month to Thomas A. Coughlin, Commissioner of the state's Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, the panel charged that Flower and Fifth "has failed to respond to the extensive needs" of the former Willowbrook patients.

Moreover, the panel said, the panel's medical consultant had determined that some of the six patient deaths at

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