

belief that the retarded are dangerous, threatening, ugly, or simply that their presence will drive property values down. None of this is true." Howse supports this statement with a study by Princeton professor Julian Wolpert on the impact of group homes on their surrounding communities. Wolpert found no negative effects and noted that the group homes were generally better maintained.

Duncan Whiteside of the One to One advocacy group for the mentally retarded points out: "Fear of the retarded, whether founded or unfounded, is itself real and has to be dealt with. You're touching upon my core interests. My family. My home. My community."

Some feel that educating the community is the key. But even when efforts to educate the public are at their best—including door-to-door talks with the neighbors of a prospective site—the words tend to fall on deaf ears. "If I go over there and end up liking those people," reasoned a woman living across the street from a new hostel upon turning down an invitation to visit, "then we might never get rid of them."

These extreme attitudes have prompted one member of the Review Panel to lash out at the OMRDD for even listening to them. Murray Schneps is a lawyer who speaks with undisguised anger about the way the mentally retarded are mistreated. He was a force behind the original Willowbrook suit, in which his retarded daughter was named as a plaintiff. "The state encourages this ridiculous resistance," he fumes, "by acting as if the resisters have some rights. And this negates the rights of the mentally retarded, whom the state should be protecting. Sure I believe educating the public is important, but I can't wait for everybody's mind to change. We need improvements now. The state, every time it gives in just a little, is giving credibility to such illegal opposition."

The neighborhood opposition to the relocation project has centered in the local community boards. While the boards are typically passive when the state approaches with a proposed site, they turn into fiery forums for protest when the affected blocks find out.

State Senator Frank Padavan, not a strong advocate of group homes, saw the opportunity to become the Kissinger of the controversy by setting legal guidelines for the relocation. The Padavan law, in effect since September 1978, rules that legitimate protest can be brought against a proposed site if it oversaturates an area with social-service-related residences, thereby significantly altering the character of