

Good news: State opens 3 offices to help with mentally retarded

The state has opened offices in each of the borough's community board areas to offer information to families of the mentally retarded and their neighbors and to acquaint the public with staff and programs at the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook.

Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly joined state mental retardation officials, representatives of the community boards and mental health workers in a ceremony yesterday afternoon inaugurating the so-called community services offices.

"There is nothing impersonal about these community services offices," Mrs. Connelly told her audience in a ballroom of the Island Townhouse in Great Kills, "there can be no impersonal callousness impeding the work."

The three community services offices are located at 100 Park Ave., Port Richmond; 26 Dumont Ave., Grasmere, and Nelson Terr., Great Kills.

The offices are designed to serve the public on a walk-in basis, according to James Stanley, director of the Great Kills office.

Counselors and other professional staff are available to deal with the problems of mentally retarded people who have never been institutionalized, as well as with those who have been housed or treated in the state system.

The community services offices are also intended to improve communication with the public as the state continues to set up group homes for the retarded in Staten Island neighborhoods.

A federal court judgment in 1975, called the Willowbrook Consent Decree, forced the state to gradually move the mentally retarded from overcrowded and restrictive institutions to a more normal environment in the community.



Discussing the borough's new mental retardation information offices are, from left, Dr. Ella Curry, director of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Mark Usdane, assistant commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and assistant commissioner of the city Department of Mental Health and Alcoholic Substances, and Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly.

S.I. Advance Photo by Frank J. Johns

The community services offices are an adjunct of the Borough Developmental Services Office, which proposes sites for group homes and selects mentally retarded clients to live in them. BDSO, based at the Staten Island Developmental Center, is an arm of the state's Office for Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Speakers at yesterday's ceremony, in addition to Mrs. Connelly, included Dr. Ella Curry, director of the Staten Island Developmental Center, and Emanuel Barsky, an officer of the Willowbrook Benevolent Society, a parents' group that monitors care for the mentally retarded.