

Eyes S.I. location for state agencies

Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly asked New York State officials yesterday to consider relocating the regional offices of state agencies to the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook.

"With the decrease in population at the center and the availability of several surplus buildings at the 382-acre facility, it seems to me that the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, in particular, would be an ideal choice to move into the center," Connelly said.

In letters to Gov. Carey and several state commissioners, she noted that earlier in the year the governor announced that the state would try to sell the World Trade Center. State agencies located in the World Trade Center would thus be dispersed throughout New York City.

"I know that the Office of General Services is close to signing a contract with a company to evaluate the Developmental Center for future use. I feel that now is the time to make the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities needs known. I think the Staten Island Developmental Center would be an ideal location for it," she said.

"I also believe that a move by the state agencies into the center would have symbolic value. It was not long

ago that Willowbrook State School, the former name for the center, was known as a deplorable institution. Since then it has obviously improved, and a move here by state agencies could serve as a final signal of improvement and change of philosophy."

Connelly also noted that "the center is easily accessible by car and I'm sure our borough officials would be willing to work in improving public transportation to the site." —Mary Engels

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