

Willowbrook gets bad marks

By DANIEL HAYS and RICHARD ROSEN

Despite monitoring by 14 governmental agencies, the Staten Island Developmental Center at Willowbrook continues to be a filthy, rat and roach-infested institution where many residents are allowed to lie nude or partially clothed in their own excrement, a Brooklyn Federal Court judge charged yesterday.

In a highly critical 70-page opinion, Judge John R. Bartels ordered the appointment of an overseer to direct the improvement of conditions at the 50-year-old facility for the mentally retarded. He said similar problems exist at the Bronx and Brooklyn developmental centers, and the Glen Oaks and Nina Eaton centers in Queens.

Bartels said that conditions at Willowbrook have worsened since the state signed a 1975 consent agreement in which it agreed to cut the institution's

Judge claims filth, other ills still persist

population from 5,343 to 250 by April 1981 and improve services. He said the number of patients had been cut to 1,369, with 999 transferred to other state or private institutions.

Sanitation "is totally unsatisfactory and presents a serious health hazard to the resident population," Bartels said. "Of particular concern is the filthy condition of kitchens and bathrooms," which were "infested with rodents and cockroaches." The dining rooms were also infested with insects and rodents, he said.

THE JUDGE, WHO personally toured Willowbrook, found that kitchen implements were unclean

and that food was served and stored at temperatures "that encourage spoilage."

Bathroom facilities were frequently not operating, missing soap and towels and "filled with human excrement," Bartels charged. Willowbrook patients "sit and lie on floors that are dirty, not uncommonly with human excrement, and sleep in bedrooms reeking of urine."

He said clean clothes and laundry are mingled with garbage and food on the floors and patients "are partially clothed, others go nude and many wear clothing that is ill fitting, badly torn or stained."

Betsy Crowell, assistant commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, declined immediate comment on the judge's decision and opinion.

Bartels' action came after several groups that obtained the 1975 consent order complained it was being violated.

Bartels will appoint an overseer based on four recommendations from the state and plaintiffs that are scheduled to be submitted May 14.