



The New York Times / Lawrence Mureesan

Patients at the Staten Island Developmental Center at Willowbrook taking a class yesterday in basic reading skills.

State Disputes Court Ruling on Its Care of Retarded

By PETER KIHSS

New York State yesterday accused a Federal judge of engaging in "sensationalized rhetoric" and said it would appeal a decision that the state had failed to carry out reforms for mentally retarded patients.

Zygmund L. Slezak, Acting State Commissioner of Mental Retardation, said he was "angry" at Wednesday's decision by Judge John R. Bartels, who moved to appoint a special master to supervise the state program.

"Major progress" has been made at the Staten Island Developmental Cen-

ter at Willowbrook, subject of a 1975 consent decree, Mr. Slezak said. "Our clients are getting good care and are not in danger," he added.

Commissioner Slezak also attacked the Federal Department of Justice, which had acted as a friend of the court in the case, for "demanding smaller and more expensive programs" of community placement while the Office of Management and Budget seeks to cut Federal funds.

He was alluding to proposed cuts in eligibility and reimbursement for pa-

tients in the Medicaid program, in which care of the mentally retarded is a state option, not mandated. Half of Medicaid costs are federally paid; in New York, the state and localities share the rest.

At Willowbrook, Dr. Ella Curry, director of the center, now down to 761 patients under state care and 450 under United Cerebral Palsy management, showed the facilities to the members of the press to rebut Judge Bartels's denunciation of the levels of sanitation, maintenance and programming.

Dr. Curry had been credited by the

judge with closing six buildings and increasing staff training in her 14-month tenure, but she called the decision a "disservice." She said the American Medical Association News reported this month that it had found clients "apparently content, healthy and well-cared for, their quarters sparse but colorful and clean, equipment for their education and physical development modern and well-used."

Robert Schomborn, executive director of United Cerebral Palsy of New York State, said Judge Bartels's decision ignored individual patient differences.