

# Hit state care of retarded

By BELLA ENGLISH

State-run community homes for the mentally retarded provide poorer, more expensive care than private agencies that house the retarded, a state commission has concluded.

The median annual cost per resident at a private agency's group homes and apartments is \$27,876 compared with \$43,093 for the state, according to a report by the Commission on the Quality of Care for the Mentally Retarded.

The more expensive state care was due in part to state salaries, which are about \$2,000 more per year than those in voluntary agencies. In addition, the report said, apartments that house two or three retarded persons are costly and provide fewer services than group homes.

Since 1976, the state has relocated thousands of mentally retarded residents from the Willowbrook State Developmental Center on Staten Island to community residences after patients filed suit over substandard conditions.

**ALTHOUGH THE** state has had problems in changing from institutions to community-based services, the commission noted that the move has improved care and saved money.

Jack Gorelick, director of the voluntary Association for the Help of the Retarded—who helped patients file the Willowbrook suit—said yesterday that the state bureaucracy accounted for the high price of inferior care.

"We have been saying all along that we can do it better and cheaper," Gorelick said. "The state should be the provider of last resort."

Gorelick said the severely retarded should be placed in group homes, where more supervision is available, and those less retarded in apartments.

The state's median cost of housing the retarded in apartments was \$47,074 a year, according to the study. For both the state and voluntary agencies, the median cost of housing the retarded in group homes was \$28,639, compared with \$37,024 at the state institutions.

The study is the state's first attempt to examine whether community based group homes for the retarded are less expensive and provide better care. ■

Daily News, Monday, August 30, 1982