

Ex-Willowbrook patients housed in expensive facility

Foulup costing taxpayers \$14M

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ALBANY — Two years ago, officials were ready to move Mary Jones from Flower Hospital in Manhattan to a less expensive community facility.

But the 24-year-old Miss Jones (not her real name), remains at Flower — where she continues to receive medical services she no longer requires. She is one of 102 former Staten Island Developmental Center residents moved

to Flower in 1978.

It costs taxpayers \$124,830 a year to keep her at Flower, which is said to be the most expensive retardation program in the United States. That amounts to \$14.97 million for the former Willowbrook patients.

"I'd say at least 75 of the class members (former Willowbrook residents) are ready to move into community facilities," said John Keane, Flower's executive director. "But we just have no place to

move them."

The problem is that the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities wants to place the residents in 10- to 50-bed facilities. But the New York Civil Liberties Union and others say the residents would be better off in three to five-bed apartments.

And while the case proceeds through the courts — a federal district court judge's ruling in favor of the smaller facilities is

being appealed by the state — the residents stay put, getting expensive care all sides agree is not needed.

"Believe me, nobody would like them out more than us," Keane said. "We have a host of people in need of our services waiting to get into the hospital."

Robert Levy, a counsel for the Civil Liberties Union, maintains that despite the high cost of running Flower, most patients would get far better care at half the

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