

Cuomo signs bill to aid older handicapped children

By **MARC HUMBERT**

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Institutionalized disabled children and their parents may get some additional help through the often difficult "aging out" process, under terms of legislation signed yesterday by Gov. Mario Cuomo.

As it stands, state support for such disabled children ends when the child reaches age 21. This aging out often leaves parents scrambling for services for their children.

"Because funding for residential placements terminates when the child attains the age 21, the 'aging out' process is often a chaotic time as parents struggle to find acceptable services for their children and to avoid placing their children in large institutions," said Cuomo in his bill-approval message.

Under terms of the bill, the parents of such children must be notified when the child turns 18 that it's time to begin planning for the aging out.

The legislation also requires, with the parents' consent, that state and local social services officials dealing with the handicapped determine what services will be available and what will be needed once he or she turns 21.

William Knowlton, a spokesman for the state's Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, said that

about 300 children in state facilities age-out each year.

Cuomo noted that he had called for such legislation and said it was modeled on a similar referral and planning program enacted last year for disabled children residing in out-of-state facilities.

The governor said the new legislation would help "assure that care for severely disabled young adults is not abruptly terminated."

Cuomo announced action yesterday on other legislation, including:

Nursing home felons

The governor approved legislation which requires the automatic revocation of an operating certificate for a health care facility if the operator or owner is convicted of a class A, B or C felony or a felony related to programs regulated by the state health department.

Peter Slocum, a spokesman for the department, said the legislation was designed to allow the state to move immediately against convicted felons who operate nursing homes.

The measure was necessary because of a conflict in two state laws which led the state Court of Appeals to rule in 1982 that two nursing home operators couldn't

have their licenses yanked by the state after their felony convictions.

The new measure will permit the department to pull the licenses of "at least eight" nursing home operators immediately, said Slocum.

Part of record

Gov. Cuomo vetoed a measure which would have required state agencies to make recommendations by a hearing officer part of their official record in all cases. It would have also required the agency to explain why it had taken a different tack when its ruling went contrary to the recommendation of the officer.

"This bill creates additional burdens for state agencies, yet no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the existing system is inadequate," said Cuomo in his veto message.

Towing

Towing agencies will have to notify police immediately after removing a vehicle unlawfully parked on private property, under terms of a bill signed by Cuomo. The measure should help police deal with such problems and also to help people whose cars have been towed to find their vehicles.