

Friday
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for the mentally retarded.

A formal plan for the phase-out will be delivered to the governor's office within the next few weeks, Webb said.

In addition to starting the final phase-out of SIDC, Webb said he hopes to spend this year dealing with problems faced by community clients, those retarded persons who have never been institutionalized. Advocates have complained in the past that this population has been ignored.

Webb said that his agency must be sensitive to the needs of families who have "struggled and sacrificed" to keep their children out of state institutions.

OMRDD plans to open 1,442 beds in community residences statewide this year. Webb said, and 625 are allocated for community clients. Of the 1,750 beds scheduled to open next year, Webb said that 900 should be open for community clients.

Webb said he also hopes to increase respite and homemaker services for families with retarded children at home, and that OMRDD will work this year with other state agencies to coordinate those kind of services for state residents.

"What the governor is saying is that we need to strengthen and improve our system so we can keep people at home for as long as appropriate and possible," Webb said.

"What we have before us is a major undertaking," Webb said. "But I am confident and I am optimistic."



Elin Howe, associate commissioner of the Southeastern County Service Group, gets help with a corsage from Commissioner Arthur Y. Webb of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.