

rounding Corson's Brook Woods, Webb said his agency is successfully phasing out the SIDC. "We've done incredibly well in the past three, four years," Webb said. "We had 978 patients last year and we now have about 740 clients. We hope to be down at 560 in April '85.

"We have all the money we need to close Willowbrook, probably in 1987, and we have it all outlined where the patients are to go — to group homes here, to group homes there," he said. "I really, honestly think we are in the final stage of fulfilling the consent decree."

The Willowbrook Consent Decree was signed by then-Gov. Hugh Carey in 1975 to settle a lawsuit charging neglect of SIDC patients, which then numbered more than 5,000. Under the decree, the agency agreed to reduce the patient population to 250 by 1981 — a deadline since pushed back — and to place the clients in community residences.

Efforts to fulfill the agreement have been slowed by public resistance to group homes, Webb said. "When we've gone before community boards, there have been times we've been rejected out of hand."

The agency also must deal with layoffs during the phase-out of the SIDC, Webb said. "We've got 1,600 staff people now at SIDC, and we'll be decreasing that number by 600 within the year and a half.

"Most of these workers are Staten Islanders. Most are women. Many of are single parents or this is a second job in the family, which makes it difficult for them to relocate. So we have an economic and a social issue to be concerned about here," he said, adding that unions are pressuring the state to use SIDC workers to staff new group homes.



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S.I. Advance Photos by Frank Johns

Not only would more group homes resolve labor problems, but the homes are also desperately needed — for both patients coming out of institutions and for people now living at home whose families cannot care for them any longer.

"We just can't keep up with the demand" for group home beds, Webb said, noting that some families must now place their children in out-of-state facilities.

"We're going to be dealing with this kind of pressure for the next 10 years before we catch up," he said. "It's not a good situation."

*(The Advance Editorial Board for this meeting consisted of Les Trautmann, editor; William Huus, associate editor; Mark Hanley, editorial page editor; Mark Davis, editorial writer, Martha Bendix, copy editor, and Julie Mack, copy editor/staff writer.)*



*"I would insist on a cooperative relationship" with the College of Staten Island should it be relocated to land around the Staten Island Developmental Center.*