

Violations found in private homes housing retarded

Associated Press

State regulators have agreed to upgrade their supervision of private homes for the retarded after an audit disclosed widespread violations by the homes and their government watchdogs.

The audit, issued yesterday by Comptroller Edward V. Regan, found that 10 percent of the homes in the state, and 37 percent in New York City, lacked valid licenses or operating certificates as of June 1983.

Regan said his findings show that case managers have not made required visits to their clients, and have frequently failed to file reports when they did. The audit also uncovered numerous safety violations in the homes.

The 19-page report suggested that the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities has neglected the Family Care Program, which houses 3,700 retarded people in 1,700 homes.

The report was based on records of facilities housing 1,300 people.

The state agency agreed with many of Regan's findings, and said it is in the process of revising its regulations in response. The OMRDD has 90 days to report on its progress.

Regan said his auditors reviewed records kept at five OMRDD centers that oversee homes for the retarded in Queens, the Bronx, Melville on Long Island, and upstate Binghamton and West Seneca. Investigators also visited some homes.

The report said safety inspections at the homes, required

twice a year, were conducted far less frequently than that and were announced in advance, contrary to rules. At 15 of 21 homes in Queens and the Bronx, no safety inspections had been held for three years, it said.

An inspector in 1980 reported "numerous building deficiencies and safety and environmental violations" at one home in the Bronx, but six retarded people continued to live there for two more years, the report said.

"Our visits ... disclosed such unreported deficiencies as low ceiling heights, insufficient bathroom facilities, client bedrooms located in a basement area and substandard bedroom space," the audit said.

The auditors also reported a lack of fire evacuation plans and "numerous inoperable smoke detectors and fire extinguishers."

A summary of the audit also noted that many clients "are not receiving the required annual physical, dental and psychological examinations. Case managers do not visit their clients monthly as required, and when they do make visits, there is unsatisfactory documentation of the visit."