

=It's your opinion

Residence plan makes good sense

The commissioner of the Office of Mental Retardation/Development Disabilities has recently announced a plan to create Small Residential Units (SRU) on the grounds of existing developmental centers throughout the state. We think this plan makes eminently good sense and is a practical, economical and humane step forward for the mentally retarded and developmentally disabled of our state.

The very bottom line issue is the level of functioning of the clients remaining in the institu-

tional population at the present time, and what is best for them. Anyone who has visited these institutions recently knows that these are very severely involved people and require almost total care. Few have any awareness and almost none have any ability to feed themselves, attend to their personal needs, or move about independently. We believe that care for these remaining clients can best be provided in a properly run institutional setting, rather than in apartment buildings and community residences in New York City. . . .

The majority of mentally retarded and developmentally disabled people who have lived in

institutions in New York City have already found their way into good community placements. Our own agency has accepted the responsibility for more than 300 of these people over the past 10 years of "deinstitutionalization." Many live in groups homes which are functioning well. However, we do not believe these group homes are the answer for the very severely involved still remaining in the institutions. . . .

We think that the new state plan for smaller residential units is a giant step forward. It reduces the problem of "bigness" in institutions, offers smaller and more manageable units as a better alternative for care, and utilizes the existing resource of staff, property and facilities within the existing developmental centers. This is not only good economic sense, it is humane and effective planning for the better care of severely involved people who are part of our public responsibility.

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