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LETTERS

The state's mentally ill are better off in a community setting, not in institutions

YOUR recent editorial regarding the Office of Mental Health's long-range services plan will serve to perpetrate misconceptions about that plan.

Our plans are to increase the number of beds and services available, particularly in New York City. This will be achieved through a major expansion of community-based residential and support services.

Over the 10-year period, the plan calls for 12,000 new beds statewide, with 6000 of them in New York City. These figures in-

clude an expansion of 6000 community residence beds, 1000 municipal or voluntary hospital beds and 5000 beds to be developed as residential care centers for adults.

The real issue is not what the size of our state institutions will be, but whether New York City's mentally ill citizens will be treated close to home in smaller community-based settings or shipped hundreds of miles to impersonal and costly institutions.

We have not embarked upon a policy to force "former patients to move into Grand Central Terminal." Reductions in the state centers will occur only as a result of the major expansion of community-based services.

Parents, advocates and mental health professionals have long argued for the development of comprehensive community-based services as an alternative to institutional care.

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