

## ***State and Families Reach Final Accord Over Willowbrook***

A Federal judge in Brooklyn has approved a final settlement involving reforms in conditions at a state center for the mentally retarded that were first sought in 1972 and ordered in 1975.

The agreement, signed by District Judge John Bartels, confirms that by the end of the year the state will close the 60-year-old center, which gained national notoriety as the Willowbrook State School and is now known as the Staten Island Developmental Center.

State officials said yesterday that they have been making progress in moving patients out of Willowbrook, where wards once jammed far beyond capacity now hold only 130 patients.

The new agreement calls for those patients to be moved to group homes with fewer than 16 beds. The state also promised to place about 1,200 other patients who once lived at Willowbrook in smaller institutions by 1992. The 1,200 are now living in other large state-operated developmental centers.

The state will not pay any monetary damages to the families of former Willowbrook patients. The state will also establish a special office to look after the rights of former Willowbrook patients who do not have family or guardians to represent them.

In the 1970's, more than 5,000 patients were crowded into Willowbrook's antiquated wards, which were infested with vermin. When parents sued the state over the conditions, Judge Bartels ruled that Willowbrook was overcrowded and inhumane. In 1975, the state and the families agreed to a consent decree under which Willowbrook's population was to be trimmed to 250 patients.