

Mentally handicapped: Many groups and programs

BY ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

A sad chapter in the state's treatment of the mentally retarded ended last September when the Staten Island Developmental Center — the former Willowbrook State School — closed its doors.

Willowbrook during the early 1970s was crowded with thousands of patients. As many as 6,000 people were jammed in the understaffed and unsanitary institution. Media investigations followed by a class action suit revealed the horror of Willowbrook to the public.

In 1975, as a result of that class action filed in 1972, a federal judge ordered the state to move Willowbrook residents into group homes. Deadlines through the years went unmet by the state and the settlement terms were extended.

A final settlement between the state and the plaintiffs required that all former Willowbrook residents and those who are still living at the facility be placed in group homes by 1992. Of past Willowbrook clients, 110

remain on the grounds in Executive Way, a complex of group homes. The others have either moved into community facilities elsewhere or other developmental centers. By 1992, those in these centers will go to group homes.

To continue to serve the mentally retarded, the state has retained about 175 acres of land from the old institution's 380-acre site. The land retained holds the Institute for Basic Research, small group homes, administrative buildings and the Elizabeth A. Connelly Community Resource Center — a clearing house of services and information.

The remaining 205 acres of the site will become the new campus of the College of Staten Island. The college plans to consolidate its Sunnyside and St. George campuses on the Willowbrook site by the end of 1992.

The college, the institute and the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities office will work jointly to establish the Center for Developmental Neurosciences. It will generate interdisciplinary research and grant programs, tech-

nical, non-degree and related training and offer professional supervision for field and clinical staff.

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The Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities offers a number of services on the grounds of SIDC including a respite/drop-in center.

The respite center offers parents a place to leave retarded children for up to 30 days a year if they cannot be cared for at home. The drop-in center, a day program, operates from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day.

SIDC is not accepting new admissions. For families who need information about Island services, contact the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Information Exchange at the Staten Island Boro Developmental Services Office (BDSO), 26 Dumont Ave., Dongan Hills. The number is 351-7701 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The information and referral service acts as a central directory

of services for the retarded and developmentally disabled on Staten Island.

BDSO provides a number of services including case management, drop-in/respite services, homemaker services and crisis intervention. The latter, crisis intervention, can be contacted 24 hours a day at 983-5200 after business hours. During the day, the number is 351-7730 at the BDSO office.

The following is a list of agencies which provide diagnostic, referral, residential and/or treatment services for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled people:

● Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development operates a group home and a sheltered workshop for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled adults. The agency can be reached at 356-8800.

● Association for the Help of Retarded Children operates two adult group homes, one on the grounds of the former Staten Island Developmental Center and the other at Petersen House at 200

Tysen St. It also operates a Saturday recreation program for young adults in St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Eltingville, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. followed by a pre-school recreation program from 1 to 3 p.m.

They also offer an overnight respite program and maintain a parents' assistance committee and parent support group. For information on all of the association's services, call Meghan Howie at 212-254-8203.

● A Very Special Place, 1429 Hylan Blvd., Dongan Hills, operates day treatment programs which include clinical and support services for people age 21 and over, and has a community center which can provide a recreational/socialization program for those 18 and over. Day treatment programs are offered at sites on Nelson Avenue in Great Kills and New Dorp Lane, New Dorp; a senior citizens program on Seaview Avenue, Dongan Hills, including transportation, for those 55 and older. In addition, a TeleRide program provides clients with transportation to program centers and elsewhere. Phone: 987-1234.

● Catholic Guardian Society operates a geriatric group home for the aged developmentally disabled on Dresden Place, Todt Hill. Phone: 212-371-1000, ext. 2300.

● Committee on Special Education (CSE), a subdivision of the city Board of Education's Division of Special Education, offers evaluation and school placement for physically and mentally handicapped children from kindergarten to age 21. The committee places students in various special education programs. They can be reached at 816-1900.

● The Richmond Occupational Training Center in Clifton is a Board of Education program that provides secondary educational and occupational training for developmentally and physically handicapped young adults ages 14 to 21. The center can be reached at 273-8622.

● PS 37 moved from South Beach Psychiatric Center to the former Barnes Intermediate

School annex at 15 Fairfield St., Great Kills. It serves autistic, developmentally disabled and emotionally disturbed children age 5 to 21. The telephone number is 984-9800; the principal is Nancy Burri.

● Early Childhood Direction Center at 1545 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, is an information and referral service for handicapped children. The state-funded center assists in finding programs for children from newborn to age 5. Phone: 604-6412.

● Eden II School for Autistic Children, at Bayley Seton Hospital, provides classroom instruction, adaptive physical education, speech therapy, psychological and social services, parent training, and an adult training program. For school-age children, 5 to 21; the adult program serves clients older than 21. For more information, call 816-1422.

● Our P.L.A.C.E. School has pre-school programming for developmentally and learning disabled children age 2 to 5 emphasizing speech and language instruction. Their 'Topsy' program offers physical therapy and other services for infants at home. Social and emotional problems also are addressed and speech, occupational and music therapy are provided. For more information, call 987-9400.

● The Down's Syndrome Learning Center provides infant stimulation and pre-school programs for Down's Syndrome children, as well as classes from first to third grade, and an enrichment program that combines recreation and individual tutoring. It also has a parents' support group and a variety of after-school programs, including a Cub Scouts troop for handicapped boys. The center provides year-round programming including youth baseball. Phone: 718-317-6277.

● Community Treatment Clinic of the North Richmond Community Mental Health Center, based at Bayley Seton Hospital, addresses mental health needs of mentally retarded and developmentally disabled people, age 16 and up. Clients are seen individually and in group sessions, and families are also offered support. For more information, call 390-1626.

● Staten Island Aid, also based at Bayley Seton Hospital, sponsors a variety of programs for the mentally retarded, all of which include psychological and social services, speech therapy and training in self-help skills.

Programs include a pre-school for youngsters at the hospital, age 3 to 5, who are developmentally delayed, and a Saturday recreation program at 550 Bay St., Stapleton. A similar program is offered during the summer.

The Stephen O'Halek Day Treatment Center, 550 Bay St., Stapleton, teaches independent living skills and provides pre-vocational training for about 50 adults, age 21 and up.

The Mary Campbell Ellis Vocational Training Center, 215 Bay St., St. George, provides occupational training and sheltered workshops for about 165 clients. AIDCO, a division of Staten Island Aid, employs a number of workshop clients who manufacture framed prints which are distributed nationally.

Staten Island Aid also runs four group homes on Staten Island for developmentally disabled adults. For information about these services, call 447-5200.

● The Staten Island Mental Health Society at 669 Castleton Ave. offers a number of programs for the developmentally disabled and mentally retarded. They include:

● The Elizabeth W. Pouch Center for Special People, which provides outpatient services including individualized diagnosis and evaluation services plus individual, family and group therapy; early childhood programs, including a five-day-a-week nursery for children age 2 to 5 who have problems in speech and language, motor skills and social relationships; the Early Intervention Guided Home Training (EIGHT), provides therapy by a multi-disciplinary team for children from birth to 3 years with severely delayed development. The phone number is 448-9775.

The Pouch Center also offers the T.I.P.S. (Training in Parenting Skills) program for training in parenting skills to mentally retarded adults who have children.

● The Staten Island Children's Community Mental Health Center operates a school for children with learning disabilities or with emotional problems, age 4½ to 7,

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● The Staten Island Children's Community Mental Health Center operates a school for children with learning disabilities or with emotional problems, age 4½ to 7,

at the PS 25 Annex, 669 Castleton Ave., with the joint sponsorship of the Board of Education. The phone number is 442-2225.

● On Your Mark is a therapeutic recreation program for developmentally disabled age 2½ years to 25. Activities are scheduled after school, evenings and weekends. It also sponsors a summer camp called Camp Tikvah. For more information call 981-1500 and ask for Dana Rydell.

● The Child Study Center of New York, 285 Clove Rd., West Brighton, is a special education program for pre-schoolers. For information call 442-8588.

● Richmond Association for the Developmentally Disabled in Dongan Hills provides weekend trips, bowling, theater, movies and restaurant outings for people 17 and older. It also operates a parent support group. Phone 979-0294.

● Muscular Dystrophy Association provides referral services through its Queens office at 793-1100.

● Staten Island Parents for the Autistic and Developmentally Disabled Inc., provides a Saturday recreation/education program for autistic and developmentally disabled children, age 4 and up at 309 St. Paul's Ave. The group also provides a Scouting program, a parents' support group and referral services. The telephone is 979-2993.

● Staten Island Special Olympics provides training clubs and sports activities for all handicapped people on a weekly basis. The phone is 356-0901.

● R.E.A.C.H. Program, sponsored by the city Parks and Recreation Department, provides recreation, athletics and creative arts to handicapped persons age 6 and up. Programs are scheduled after school, evenings and Saturdays, in addition to a summer day camp. For more information, call 720-1555 in the afternoons.

● United Cerebral Palsy of New York City provides infant stimulation, education, day treatment, vocational and home rehabilitation. It operates a group home on Staten Island for developmentally disabled adults, an adult rehabilitation center and programs for infants, pre-school and school-age children. Phone: 442-5614 (adult programs) and 698-5660 (children's program.)

● Staten Island Center for Independent Living in Sea View is a non-resident resource center with free or low-cost programs for disabled people of all ages. Services include personal care attendants, interpreters for the deaf, advocacy, community education, transportation, financial management, housing assistance, independent living skills and other kinds of counseling and recreation.

Many of the staff members are disabled themselves and a program is being developed for hearing impaired people. Phone: 667-1200 or (TTY) 667-0825.

● Volunteers of America Developmental Services operates 10 community residences on Staten Island for mentally retarded adults and operates a pre-school and infant stimulation program for developmentally disabled children under 5 years old. Phone 448-4730.

● Special Education program of Region VI located at 211 Daniel Low Terr., St. George, serves children age 4 to 21 who have been certified as handicapped by the Board of Education's Committee on Special Education. Services are counseling, training, placement appropriate to educational needs, parent training, and education and referral. Phone: 448-9600.

The Seton Foundation for Learning, 104 Gordon Street, Stapleton, a 10-month special education program for developmentally disabled children age 5 through 13. For information call 447-1750.

The following parent support groups are also available in addition to those affiliated with a specific agency:

● Benevolent Society for Retarded Children, Staten Island office, 983-5204.

● Prader-Willi Parent Group, 767-6077.

● Richmond Occupational Training Center PTA, 273-8622.

● Staten Island Parents of Hearing Impaired, 447-5003.

● Talking Over and Understanding Children with Handicaps (TOUCH), 273-1613.

● Tourette Syndrome Association, Queens, 224-2999. A national association that acts as an information and referral agency. Several parent support groups are located in the metropolitan area, including a Brooklyn/Staten Island chapter.

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