

# SIDC's last clients in 'prototype' homes

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Marking a new era in care for the severely developmentally disabled, the state has relocated the last 48 clients from the former Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) in three "prototype" houses.

The Executive Way homes, named for the street they're on, opened in conjunction with the September closing of SIDC and the creation of the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office (SIDDSO).

"This is a really important opportunity to show that the medically fragile, multiply handicapped can live in a community setting," said Dr. Hugh Tarpley, SIDDSO's deputy director for developmental services.

"This was the population many people were most concerned about — what would happen to them when SIDC closed," he said. Some advocates and families feared that these clients, most of whom are profoundly retarded and medically frail, might require an institutional setting to be assured the round-the-clock care they need.

"I was probably one of those people who needed to be convinced," said Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, D-West Brighton, who toured the homes last week for the first time. As chairman of the Mental Hygiene and Addiction Control committee, she has visited similar homes opening around the

state as the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities prepares to close its five remaining developmental centers by 1991.

The \$5.2 million Executive Way group homes are just a short distance from the shuttered buildings of the former Willowbrook State School, notorious for abhorrent treatment of the mentally retarded. In the 1960s, the school warehoused some 6,000 clients in wards designed for a capacity of 4,500.

On Executive Way, 24 people live in the largest of the three houses, with 12 in each of the other two. The homes are attractive and comfortable with modern medical equipment but no antiseptic smell or feel.

Anthony Pinto, head of an organization for clients' families, said the group is pushing for more staff in the homes. Currently there is one professional staff person for every three clients, and one direct-care staff member for every six clients.

Looking into one of the two-person bedrooms, Mrs. Connelly remarked that just several years ago, these same clients were in wards, one bed next to another. Then federal regulations required the creation of cubicles for some sense of privacy.

Last year's closing of SIDC and the relocation of its last clients to group homes on and off the Island are the result of the landmark 1975 Willowbrook Consent Decree to phase out the institution.

Watching an Executive Way staff member gently

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