

provide details about the Staten Island baby, she said his mother is still living, "but there has been no contact with the parent."

"It is our hope that we establish contact with the family wherever possible," Marquit said.

Most AIDS boarder babies have not lived outside a hospital, Ms. Mullen said. "They were either abandoned or they're too sick to be cared for at home."

A typical family situation is that "the mother has AIDS, or at least is HIV positive. She's an IV drug user or she's having sexual relations with one, and all of the social chaos that goes with the drug culture is part of the child's world," Ms. Mullen said.

Residential care of the babies in the Children's Center costs \$200 a day per client, compared to \$800 a day in a hospital, Ms. Susser said. The day care and special education components cost about \$20,000 a year per child.

Developmental specialists will work with the babies, and the residence will provide 24-hour nursing care. A pediatrician affiliated with Downstate Medical Center will examine the children daily, and there is an "infection isolation room" for a baby who might have a contagious rash or cold but does not require hospitalization.

All infectious medical waste will be disposed of in accordance with state and city "red bag" regulations, Ms. Mullen said.

Staff will wear gloves when changing diapers, as is required in any hospital or day-care facility, she said. "We're not going to get crazy. Our workers are not going to use gloves to bathe the children — they don't need to."

"We're going to make them as comfortable and happy as they can be," Ms. Mullen said. "Every child has that right." To that end, the home is brightly decorated and filled with stimulating toys. "Everything is brand new and was chosen with love and care."

"The best thing we can do for these children is provide normal experiences," Ms. Mullen said. Which is one reason she is anxious for the police presence not to be needed.

"That's not my idea of normal," she said.