

Agencies serve retarded, developmentally disabled

BY ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

A sad chapter in the state's treatment of the mentally retarded ended in September, 1987 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 requires 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 300-acre site. Now called the Richmond Complex, it holds the Institute for Basic Research, small group homes, administrative buildings and the Elizabeth A.

Connelly Community Resource Center — a clearinghouse of information and services located at 1150 Forest Hill Rd., Willowbrook. Phone: 983-5352 or 983-5415.

The approximately 200 acres of the site remaining 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 1994.

The college, the institute and the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office will work jointly to establish the Center for Developmental Neurosciences. It will generate interdisciplinary research and grant programs, technical, 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 at the Richmond Complex, 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.

For families who need information about island services, contact the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Information Exchange at the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO), 26 Dumont Ave., Dongan Hills. Phone: 351-7701 or 983-5352, be-

tween 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.

DDSO provides a number of services including case management, drop-in/respite services, homemaker services and crisis intervention. The last can be contacted at 351-7730, or after business hours at 983-5200.

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 494-7542.

- 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, 200 Tysen St., New Brighton. 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.

It also offers an overnight respite program and maintains a parents assistance committee and parent support

group. For information on all of the association's services, call Rachelle Grossman at (212) 254-8203, extension 204.

- A Very Special Place, 1439 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 Neilson Avenue in Great Kills and New Dorp Lane, New Dorp. A senior citizens' program on Seaview Avenue, Dongan Hills, includes 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.

- The Child Study Center of New York, 285 Clove Rd., West Brighton, is a special education program for pre-schoolers. For information call 442-6588.

- 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 Down's Syndrome Learning

Center provides infant stimulation and pre-school programs for Down's Syndrome children. 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: 347-8277.

- Early Childhood Direction Center in 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, or contact them through Downstate Medical Center, 270-1000.

- 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, ages 5 to 21; the adult program serves clients older than 21. For more information, call 816-1422.

- Jewish Community Center of Staten Island (JCC), 485 Victory Blvd., Tompkinsville, offers programs for infants and pre-school children with developmental needs. Services and transportation are free.

- Children at Play, for infants through 3 years old, provides a special education teacher in the home and diagnostic, therapeutic and instructional services at the center. Phone: Linda Salmon at 727-8257.

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