

A different kind of group home

New facility provides only the services each client needs

By DON GROSS
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Eight former Willowbrook State School residents now living in Grant City officially celebrated the opening of a new kind of group home yesterday — one that not only provides the support services they need but cuts costs to the taxpayers.

A new take on the group home concept, this one requires less staff and fewer alterations to the existing structure.

James Stanley, the team leader in charge of the state-run group home on South Railroad Avenue that was converted from two pri-

vately owned semi-attached homes, said the basic theory is to provide only the services needed by an individual client.

Before, many group homes were required to have physical and occupational therapists on staff as well as nurses, social workers and other employees classified as "clinicians."

The new system, called an individual residential alternative, allows local managers to "buy" these services through Medicaid only for the clients who need them.

The Grant City facility is the

state officials whether the effort provides the same level of care, but at a savings.

The manager of a group home run by a voluntary agency expressed some skepticism.

The woman, who asked not to be identified, said billing for clinical services for each resident could turn into a bureaucratic nightmare.

Stanley, however, was optimistic. He said the biggest difference was in not being forced to build in safety devices for clients who didn't need them.

"The goal is to make this place look as much like a home as possible," he said, pointing to the furnishings and paintings on the wall. "I think we've achieved that."

first alternative home to open in the city. Others opened 18 months ago upstate, Stanley said.

Its first residents are group of four men and four women who range in age from their 30s to their 60s. All had lived in Willowbrook, which later became the Staten Island Developmental Center, and came to the new Grant City residence from various other group homes.

How successful this type of facility will be is still unknown. Stanley acknowledged that audits of the upstate homes have yet to be done. This information will tell