

City Starts Narcotics Plan To Turn Tide of Addiction

By THOMAS BUCKLEY

A new treatment program that will attempt "to turn the tide of narcotics addiction in the city" was announced yesterday by Mayor Lindsay. Dr. Efren Ramirez, the city's narcotics coordinator, said that he hoped to involve 5,000 addicts in the program by the end of the year and 25,000 in three to five years. He estimated the total number of addicts here at 100,000.

Former addicts will play a leading therapeutic role in the program. One of them, Victor Biondo, has been appointed as a special assistant to Dr. Ramirez.

Techniques of group therapy developed by Synanon and at Daytop Lodge on Staten Island, both of which have had considerable success in treating addicts, will also be used, Dr. Ramirez, a Puerto Rico-born psychiatrist, said, in an effort to "turn around" the addict and create the desire to be cured.

Relapse Rate High

The resistance of addicts, particularly during their teens and early twenties, along with the absence of effective therapeutic measures have led to a high rate of relapse in previous programs here.

Dr. Ramirez said that the techniques he intended to use had been employed successfully at a treatment center he headed at Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. Of the first 125 persons to be discharged, he said, only 5.5 per cent resumed the use of narcotics in a period ranging from five months to three and a half years.

The program will begin with a city appropriation of \$5.5-million for the fiscal year that began July 1 to establish pilot programs in communities of the city in which the narcotics problem is particularly acute.

In subsequent years, up to \$100-million will be required annually, Dr. Ramirez said. He added that he was hopeful of receiving appropriations from the city, state and Federal governments, in addition to contributions from private agencies that will take part in the program.

"The problem has come to a

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point where legislators have no choice but to participate generously," he asserted.

Mr. Lindsay also announced that Dr. Ramirez had been appointed as an assistant health services administrator to broaden his authority. "There can be no more important work in this city than the program launched by Dr. Ramirez and his associates," the Mayor said.

Dr. Ramirez emphasized that the new city program would be closely coordinated with the massive state treatment program, which includes the provision for the involuntary com-

mitment of addicts. The state spends eight or more hours on program will be under way drug-free surroundings, next April.

The first step, he said, will be the preparation of community opinion in areas of high drug use, such as Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Corona, Queens, for the establishment of orientation centers.

It is hoped that five centers will be in operation this year, staffed by former addicts under the supervision of psychiatrists and social workers.

The former addicts, wise in the ways of the streets, will bring addicts to the centers and begin the long process, through group meetings and persuasion, of preparing them for treatment.

Those who show the greatest inclination to be cured will be transferred to so-called day-night centers, where they can

From there, the addict will enter a hospital for detoxification—not only to free his system of drugs but to cleanse his emotional reliance on drugs.

After that, Dr. Ramirez said, in a phase lasting from six to 10 months in a hospital, the addict will receive intensive treatment, both from psychiatrists and in abrasive group discussions with other addicts and former addicts.

The treatment will be completed by a period in which the addict, now free of drugs, will return to the orientation centers to help others.

The treatment can also be effective in jail, Dr. Ramirez said, and in fact has already been begun at the City Prison on Rikers Island, where 3,000 of the 5,000 prisoners are drug addicts. Prisons throughout the state contain 14,000 addicts.