

# Willowbrook stipulation: Palsy group must run 5 buildings

By MARY BETH PFEIFFER

A 28-point stipulation, unveiled yesterday in federal court, orders the state to contract with United Cerebral Palsy for operation of five of the Willowbrook developmental center's 26 buildings, in what ultimately may be the takeover of Willowbrook facilities by UCP and other non-profit groups.

The nine-page order — designed to avoid a contempt trial against three officials of the state Mental Hygiene Department for failure to implement the terms of the so-called Willowbrook Consent Decree — also sets schedules and guidelines for the placement of Willowbrook patients in community-based settings.

The stipulation was signed in Brooklyn Federal Court by state mental hygiene officials, advocates for the mentally retarded and federal Judge John R. Bartels. The judge denied a motion by attorneys for the defendants to dismiss contempt proceedings against them, at least until additional points, to be negotiated, are presented in court April 1.

Named in the contempt papers, filed in November by attorneys for parents with children in Willowbrook, are Dr. Lawrence C. Kolb, mental hygiene commissioner; Thomas A. Coughlin, deputy state commissioner for retardation, and Dr. Alvin M. Mesnikoff, a mental hygiene regional commissioner.

The state mental hygiene officials and the plaintiffs in the case hammered out the 28-point plan in a series of negotia-

tions to determine how to remove stumbling blocks hindering implementation of the consent decree.

The 1975 decree ordered the institution's population, presently at 2,500, reduced to 250 by 1981, but community placement of residents had been running far behind schedule.

The stipulation calls for a contract with United Cerebral Palsy for "full operational authority" of five buildings at Willowbrook by July 1. It gives UCP authority to hire state staff.

If the operation "proves successful," it will be expanded to other buildings, according to the order.

While some observers see the turnover of some Willowbrook buildings as the state's first step in relinquishing its part in caring for the retarded, Deputy Commissioner Coughlin warned against such conclusions.

In a recent interview with the Advance, Coughlin stressed that a contract with United Cerebral Palsy to operate some Willowbrook buildings would not necessarily set a precedent for other state institutions for the retarded. The state has no intention of giving up other facilities in the same fashion, he said.

Anita Barrett, an attorney with the Legal Aid Society, which has long been involved in the efforts to improve conditions at Willowbrook, expressed a different interpretation of the planned contract with UCP.

"If it works out, there is no reason not to believe that the (state) would not