



A classroom of Building 26's deaf-blind program goes unused because the intended UCP takeover has cast doubts upon its future.

Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

The residents of the deaf-blind program, though, were the most unfortunate victims. Their learning activities and therapy, staff said, had been halted last Wednesday, pending more definite word.

The children, as a result, sat on sparsely staffed ward floors yesterday doing nothing.

One therapy aide hired by UCP was asked if he considered the level of programming low. He answered: "No comment," then explained the situation is "really confusing now because we're not in charge until tomorrow."

Other buildings set for UCP operation were in similar disarray.

Robert Schonhorn, UCP's executive director, explained the 240 therapy aides already on the staff at Willowbrook are confused because private supervisors have not yet reported to work.

"But I guarantee you," he said, "as of

tomorrow the people will be A-1 or they won't be."

Four state workers — two in Building 12, one in 26 and one in 13 — claimed not to have gotten new job assignments.

The state response was that "there might be some isolated cases like that, but on the whole the reassignment process was a carefully thought-out process."

A private professional, who asked to remain anonymous, called the Advance last night to say she'd been at Willowbrook yesterday and feared reporting to work today. Mounting speculation that there'd be a job action, she said, was giving her second thoughts.

"We've voiced our concerns to UCP as a group," she said, "but there's little they can do except take precautions.

"Yes it's a job. But there are lots of other jobs. The most important thing is that you should want to care for the residents."

At a rally on the Capitol steps yesterday, followed by a march to the state mental hygiene agency, the state employees threatened for a second time a "sick-out" or "lock-in" if the takeover is carried out.

The employees accused Gov. Carey of "using a charitable organization to perform the function of state government."

CSEA president William McGowan claimed in a statement that the state had agreed to the arrangement because federal funds could be used to cover much of the cost, estimated by UCP at approximately \$28,000 a year a patient. State care for each resident is about the same cost.

The takeover of seven buildings at the developmental center, including five buildings constituting the baby complex and Buildings 13 and 15, grew out of a March agreement in Brooklyn Federal Court.

It was desired by parents of Willowbrook's retarded, who felt it would be a remedy to some of the problems associated with any institution Willowbrook's size.

Yesterday, Federal Court Judge John Bartels, who approved the state-to-UCP transfer, ordered a hearing on the whole takeover problem at an undisclosed date.