

'Sickout' staged at developmental center

State workers staged a "sickout" yesterday at three Staten Island Developmental Center buildings under the control of the United Cerebral Palsy Association of New York.

The three buildings, 12, 13 and 15, are staffed by a combination of state employees and workers hired by UCP, a private group that took over the care of 640 of the institution's retarded residents in September.

Robert Schonhorn, UCP's executive director, said that despite the absence of one-quarter of the 63 state workers scheduled to work the day shift yesterday, services to the retarded residents did not suffer.

By evening, however, absenteeism apparently declined. Although exact figures

were not available last night, the nursing office reported that the number of absences was "not higher than we do have on normal days" for the 3 to 11:30 p.m. evening shift.

Geneva Sadler, associate director of nursing, said the three buildings run by the association had "more than minimal coverage" and were experiencing "no problems" in caring for the residents.

Schonhorn said that the workers' places were taken by therapists and other UCP employees who made sure that all patients "were washed and cared for. And the state workers who came to work did an excellent job," he said.

State workers, who declined to be identified, said the "sickout" was called

to protest conditions at the UCP buildings. "There's a shortage of staff and we just can't continue to do all of the work required to care for our patients," one worker said.

Felton King, president of the Willowbrook institution's chapter of the Civil Service Employees Association, said the "sickout" had not been organized by the union.

"I just think that the workers have been forced to work so hard that they just couldn't take it anymore," King said. "There's a tremendous need for more staff in those buildings."

Schonhorn and Elin Howe, director of the developmental center, were unavailable late yesterday to answer charges of staffing shortages at the buildings. Re-

cently, UCP fired 25 of its workers, claiming that they had an excessive absentee rate and were not doing their jobs properly.