

# State agencies probing United Cerebral Palsy

By ROBERT LANE

Two state agencies are probing reports that United Cerebral Palsy of New York has engaged in questionable practices and may be misusing Medicaid funds intended for mentally retarded patients.

The state Commission on Quality

Care for the Disabled and the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities launched the investigation following a series of published reports alleging numerous abuses within the agency.

United Cerebral Palsy, with headquarters at 122 E. 23d St., administers a \$31 million budget, 96% of which

is funded by the taxpayer-supported Medicaid program. The agency houses and treats 887 patients in New York City.

Part of the probe reportedly is centering on the death of a 23-year-old retarded patient during dental surgery; her parents allegedly had no knowledge that the surgery was being performed. A court order is mandated in such cases.

The law also requires that deaths of mental patients be reported to the Commission on Quality Care; such a report allegedly was not filed in the case of the retarded patient, according to commission Director Clarence Sundram.

INVESTIGATORS are also looking into allegations that all UCP patients are required to purchase their clothing from a shop run by the nonprofit agency at prices as much as 100% above retail.

Medicaid provides a \$275 annual clothing allowance for residents, but the agency has reportedly taken funds out of patients' personal bank accounts to pay for clothing ordered for them.

UCP officials could not be reached for comment.

An independent audit of United Cerebral Palsy was ordered earlier this year by the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, and agency officials said they have asked auditors to pay special attention to the new allegations.