

Rosenthal said one paper in the package of documents excuses the agency's failure to inform the commission of the patient's death during dental surgery that her parents did not consent to.

But he said it would jeopardize his job to go into detail, since Schonhorn, the agency's chief officer, had "admonished" against the release of information to the Advance.

Rosenthal complained that the series of articles was too selective, focusing on financial and administrative problems while slighting the agency's progress in housing, therapy and recreation for hundreds of severely retarded patients.

"When you've got a dollar bill that is torn, or one rotten apple in the barrel, how about the other ones that are excellent, extraordinary and positive?" he said.

"Nobody is lily-white, including you or I," he continued. "I pass red lights, I go 58 miles an hour, all of us break rules. But I'm saying to you if there are rules being broken, we'll correct them."

He declined, however, to address specific allegations of improprieties by United Cerebral Palsy. "I would say on its weight, word for word, much of the six parts was true. But to go down and tick off each one would then raise the issue and probably lend credibility," he said.

Under contract to the state Office for Mental Retardation, United Cerebral Palsy spends a \$31-million annual budget to operate group homes and institutions for the mentally retarded

throughout New York state, including a 450-bed facility in Willowbrook. The agency is more than 98 percent funded by taxpayer dollars, and 86 percent of its budget consists of state and federal Medicaid grants.

In its series, the Advance reported possible conflicts of interest in the agency's financial arrangements. For example, the agency awarded a \$260,000 annual subcontract for security guards to a company owned by a member of the agency's board of directors.

Another article reported that patients in United Cerebral Palsy facilities are required to buy clothing from a boutique run by the agency in South Beach, at prices up to 74 percent above retail value.

Although the agency receives a Medicaid grant to cover the cost of patient clothing, computerized financial records showed money from the patients' personal bank accounts was repeatedly withdrawn to pay boutique bills.

Last February the boutique purchased a large stock of unnecessary winter jackets, but processed orders for hundreds of them regardless of whether the patients already had a coat, according to a memo obtained by the Advance.