

Update

State nears end of 2 probes of UCP's dealings

Last June, two state agencies announced plans to investigate allegations that United Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State had misused Medicaid funds and abused the rights of mentally retarded patients.

Questions about the charitable organization were first raised in a six-part series of articles published in the Advance.

The probes are now expected to end in November, according to officials in the state agencies involved — the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and the Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled.

In mid-September, the Office of Mental Retardation allocated \$12,850 for an audit specifically on questions raised in the newspaper series, according to Kevin Travis, the department's associate commissioner of quality assurance.

The money was awarded to the private auditing firm of Deloitte, Haskins & Sellis, which had been hired under a separate \$19,000 contract to perform a federally-required review of the agency's Medicaid reimbursement rate.

It is looking into questionable financial practices, such as a \$200,000 Medicaid-funded contract for security guards that UCP awarded to a member of its board of directors.

Meanwhile, the Commission on Quality of Care is investigating the death of a 24-year-old woman during dental surgery her parents did not know about. The woman was a patient at a UCP institute in Willowbrook.

Gary Masline, a spokesman for the commission, says its staff has gathered preliminary data, but is still awaiting the autopsy report.

Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, who chairs the Assembly Mental Health Committee, says that if she is not satisfied with the state probes she will hold legislative hearings on UCP operations.

Under contract to the state, United Cerebral Palsy spends a \$31-million annual budget to run group homes and institutions for nearly 1,000 mentally retarded people.

The agency's largest institution is the Karl D. Warner Center in Willowbrook.