

# UCP to transfer patients; state jobs to be saved

By BRUCE ALPERT

The state is ready to regain control of two buildings at the Staten Island Developmental Center operated by a private group since 1977 — a move that could ease the threat of layoffs at the Willowbrook institution.

Officials of United Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State say the transfer of Buildings 12 and 13 and its 117 residents to state control on Oct. 1 is a "fait accompli." But state officials say the plan has not been completed.

Dr. Ella Curry, director of the Island center, said if the transfer does take place it would "substantially" reduce the number of layoffs needed as the state continues to place residents into smaller community-based facilities. The Willowbrook center, which once housed over 6,000 residents, now has a patient census of 738.

Originally, it was contemplated that 500 of the center's 2,442 state employees would be out of jobs before the end of the state's 1982-83 fiscal year on March 31. Dr. Curry said no new estimates are available, but the transfer of Buildings 12 and 13 to state control along with other factors, including slower than anticipated placement of residents into the community, would substantially lower the number of layoffs.

In 1977, UCP assumed control of seven buildings housing 500 residents at the Staten Island Developmental Center amid major controversy. State employee unions complained that the state was exposing hundreds of state employees to layoffs

while giving a private agency, with no track record of caring for large numbers of retarded residents, a lucrative contract.

The two buildings being eyed for state takeover now operate under shared staffs and have given UCP the most trouble. UCP provided the supervisory and professional staff for the buildings, while the direct-care staff was provided by the state.

Robert Schonhorn, executive director of UCP, said the cooperation between state staff and UCP supervisors had improved recently. But he conceded that there had been problems.

"We found it very difficult to supervise people who in essence didn't work for us," Schonhorn said.

Schonhorn said UCP professional and supervisory staff displaced by the transfer to state control would be given other jobs within UCP.

Outside audits of the two buildings have complained about high absenteeism and poor communication between UCP supervisors and state workers.

UCP, Schonhorn said, would continue to operate the remaining five remaining center buildings that constitute the Karl Warner Center.

Schonhorn said he contemplated a smooth transition between UCP and state control, predicting that the 117 residents of Buildings 12 and 13 would not be adversely affected.

"We will work together with the state to evaluate every client in the two buildings to make sure that there is no interruption in care," Schonhorn said.

Dr. Curry said that it is too early to tell how many new state jobs will be created by the transfer. But she said state employees already assigned to the Willowbrook institution would be selected for whatever jobs develop.

The administrator said she anticipates large numbers of teachers and other professionals would be hired for the two buildings, which house many residents under 21 who require extensive education programs.

John Jackson, president of the Staten Island Developmental Center chapter of the Civil Service Employees Association, said he was delighted by the contemplated takeover.

"I think this is going to remove a lot of the pressure for layoffs," Jackson said. "And I think state employees are better able to care for the residents than people from a private agency."