

# Foster grandparents under new sponsor

By SHEILA CHASE

Foster grandparents on Staten Island will have a new sponsor on March 1, federal grant administrators announced yesterday.

The city Department for the Aging has been given the federal grant of \$81,000 from ACTION to administer the Foster Grandparent Program for the Island and Manhattan. For the last 10 years those programs have been handled by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) out of the borough developmental centers.

The grant amount, allotted for the fiscal year ending in June, covers 241 volunteers, including the Island's 43, according to Rep. Guy V. Molinari who, with Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, secured the award to the city. He said ACTION's rating of the Depart-



ment for the Aging, which currently administers another Foster Grandparent grant within the city, is high and "we would expect that it will continue for the next fiscal year."

The Island will have its own coordinator under city administration, according to ACTION's regional director Herbert Stupp, "though we can't guarantee that one will always be needed." He said that the Department for the Aging will make the final evaluation of staff needs once the program is operating.

Stupp also repeated assur-

ances, made throughout discussions over the fate of the OMRDD grant, that grandparents will continue serving their current clients at their current stations if at all possible.

He said that although the city agency may have to adjust the existing program in negotiation with individual volunteer stations for certain services over the next two weeks, "the Office for Aging has no reason to upset any applicants."

Letters notifying grandparents of the pending change assured them that their situation would not change except that they might be dealing with different supervisors.

"I don't see how they can promise this unless they've negotiated it" with the volunteer stations, Nettie Evans, director of the Island program under OMRDD, said.

She said that as recently as last month, she had been having trouble continuing to provide transportation for all the sites from the developmental center. She said transportation is one of the services normally paid for by each volunteer station as its contribution to the program, "but

I've been able to arrange it this way."

The city may face problems trying to arrange for in-kind services with each separate agency she said, adding that the Staten Island Developmental Center's ability to provide such things changes with its change from sponsor to volunteer site status.

OMRDD's grant for a state-wide program was rescinded Feb. 1 and divided up to be given to local sponsors after a year of tension between the federal and state agencies over the state's administrative costs.

The Department for the Aging's is the first award in the state to be made of the parceled OMRDD grant.

Applications from potential sponsors were reviewed for two weeks; the city department and the Borough Developmental Service Organization at the Staten Island Developmental Center were the only two that applied for the Island program, currently in place at six sites. Volunteer stations include the Willowbrook facility — which provides all transportation as the sponsor agency — the city's United Cerebral Palsy centers, and two public elementary schools.