

# Budget action enables UCP to stay open

By BRUCE ALPERT  
Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — The financially strapped United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) Associations of New York State, the largest private provider of services to the retarded, has "rescinded" a threat to shut down on June 15.

The decision, announced yesterday by UCP assistant executive director Cora Hoffman, ensures the continued employment of 2,000 agency employees and continued services to its 700 clients. Many of the clients and employees are Staten Island residents.

"We're not out of the woods yet, but recent actions will enable us to continue running our programs," Ms. Hoffman said.

A decision by the the Board of Education to pay the 60-member teaching staff at the 310-bed Karl Warner Center in Willowbrook, Ms. Hoffman said, was a key factor in saving the UCP programs, which also include the 50-bed Nina Eaton Center in Ocea-

Breeze and community residences throughout the city.

In addition, she said the agency had achieved about \$5 million in savings by cutting back some services, including the practice of transporting residents of its community residences to movies, bowling and other recreational facilities.

Some staff members and residents say the cuts have kept residents glued to their apartments with little to do but watch television and listen to music.

"It's a little boring because sometimes we don't have anything to do around the apartments," said Harrison Gregg, 28, a resident of a UCP group home. "I don't think it's fair that we can't go bowling or things like that."

Ms. Hoffman said UCP continues to believe that taking clients to movies, restaurants and sports activities is an important part of assimilating them into the community.

"But apparently the state no longer thinks this is so important," said Ms. Hoffman, who contends the state Medicaid rate won't allow "enriched programming."

Ms. Hoffman said New York State UCP is unable to fund raise in the community because of an agreement with United Cerebral Palsy of New York City and other local UCP chapters that it would not compete for private funds.

William Knowlton, spokesman for the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabil-

ities, said the state is continuing discussions with UCP administrators. In the past, the state has rejected UCP claims for higher Medicaid rate, saying the agency had spent its Medicaid funds carelessly.

Arlene Pedone, a Board of Education administrator, said the city schools system decided to assume the salaries of UCP teachers at the Karl Warner Center to keep the education program from being shut down in the middle of the school year.

"We felt it was important not to disrupt the program in the middle of the school year because the clients are used to the teachers," Ms. Pedone said. "We were anxious that students not suffer because of governmental disputes."

The program, she said, will cost the Board of Education about \$250,000 for the remainder of the school year.

Ms. Hoffman said another factor in the agency's decision not to disband was a pledge from the state to pay about \$2 million she says is owed the agency for group home expenses dating back as far as 1981.

The state had said it was considering moving the 310 Karl Warner Center residents to the recently closed Beth Rifka Nursing Home in Concord if UCP disbanded.

Knowlton said the Facilities Development Corp. is conducting a feasibility study to determine whether it is feasible to move retarded people to the home. He said the study would continue despite the UCP decision to stay in operation.