

"Now he doesn't have that," she added. "He keeps asking us about school and the bus. He's definitely a lot sadder these days, and he's obviously nervous about not getting back to school.

"Even the clients who can't express themselves are becoming fidgety and want different things to do. This strike has made them prisoners of their own home."

The problem is complicated by that fact that her clients have limited ability to communicate, so it is difficult for staff to explain the situation, she said.

"How do they really understand?" said Ms. Rumolo. "Certainly they know that there is no bus, no school, but that is all they know."

Mrs. Hoffman said a settlement in the strike does not seem imminent. There were no negotiations last week because union officials were attending the AFL-CIO national convention in Florida. An informal meeting was held yesterday with the hope of scheduling upcoming talks.

Money is the basic issue, according to union officials, and they are asking for an annual wage minimum of \$14,000. The drivers now make between \$9,500 and \$12,000. UCP has offered a 7 percent salary in

crease, and says it cannot offer more because of recent financial problems.

In addition to disrupting transportation of clients, Mrs. Hoffman said that the strike caused a minor disruption in laundry delivery last week at the Warner Center.

The delivery is usually made by the transportation workers, but because of the strike, UCP officials rented a truck, said Mrs. Hoffman.

"The deputy director of the facility drove the truck himself, and when he returned he was pulled out of the truck and pushed around — I don't think there were any punches thrown — but he was harassed by the strikers.

"We eventually got the linen delivered and we just left the truck there. The next morning we found all the tires slashed," she said.

"At that point, we called some of the parents of the clients and they were able to work out an agreement with the strikers about deliveries."

No problems have occurred since, she added.