

UCP officials accuse strikers

of harassing staff, clients

By JULIE MACK
A three-week walkout by transportation employees for United Cerebral Palsy of New York State has taken on ugly overtones, with UCP officials accusing strikers of harassing direct care staff and clients on Staten Island and in other boroughs.

The harassment, reported to have escalated in the past few days, includes tire slashings, threatening phone calls and intimidation of cab drivers car-

rying UCP patients and staff who attempt to transport clients on mass transit, said Cora Hoffman, assistant executive director of UCP.

She also said that some strikers were picketing yesterday in Manhattan and Brooklyn with baseball bats in hand.

A union representative denied knowledge of any problems. "We are maintaining orderly picket lines," said Michael Lucivero, field representative of the Amalgamated Transit Union. Local

1181-1061. "We have no problems with the clients; some of our people have children with UCP and we are concerned that the clients are taken care of."

Yet others confirm reports of confrontations, which seem to signal increasing tensions in the contract dispute, which is no closer to being settled than when the strike began Sept. 26. No negotiations have been held since that time, although a meeting is scheduled for Monday.

Salary is the main issue in the

walkout, which involves about 100 bus drivers and bus monitors who transport mentally retarded patients from their residences to day programs and recreational activities.

UCP of New York State has 700 patients citywide, including about 400 on Staten Island.

Since the strike, UCP patients on Staten Island have been largely confined to their residential facilities. No patients have been allowed to leave the Karl D. Warner Center, which is UCP's

largest facility — with 280 patients — and has been the main focus of picketing. UCP administrators have decided not to replace UCP bus drivers with alternative bus service to avoid accusations of strike-breaking.

The situation is much the same at the Nina Eaton Center, on the grounds of South Beach Psychiatric Center, which has 50 patients. There, only a few patients have been allowed to leave the facility using alternative transportation already in place before

the strike began. Even those clients may soon be housebound if strikers go through with rumored plans to picket the Eaton center beginning Monday; administrators say they will not ask carriers to cross picket lines.

Lucivero says there have been no conflicts between strikers and UCP employees at the Warner center, despite reports of a tire-slashing incident and an effort to stop laundry deliveries two

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