

# UCP giving up facility to state

By JULIE MACK

Ending months of rumors, United Cerebral Palsy of New York State is giving up control of the Karl D. Warner Center at the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC), Willowbrook, in an effort to resolve the financial problems that were pushing the agency toward bankruptcy.

An order allowing the transfer, beginning next week, to state control was signed yesterday by Judge John Bartels in U.S. District Court in Brooklyn.

The Warner Center is a 280-bed facility for the mentally retarded on the SIDC grounds. UCP has operated the complex since 1977 under an agreement

with the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

According to yesterday's order, SIDC will take control of Building 14 Thursday, and the other six buildings will be transferred to the state during a four-month period ending May 2. The state has agreed to keep the current staff, although the top UCP administrators at Warner Center have been reassigned to other positions.

OMRDD Commissioner Arthur Y. Webb last night termed the agreement "excellent" from the state's perspective.

"The settlement worked out jointly between UCP and the

state solves a number of major problems," he said. Those include "some of the financial difficulties that UCP had," and "established an appropriate plan for return of clients to the state, solidifies a key role for UCP in the state in the future and also solves a major issue in terms of the list of creditors."

Reaching the agreement after "strong" dissension between the parties "consumed an incredible amount of staff time and energy" on both sides, Webb said.

Officials at both UCP and SIDC stressed that the order signed yesterday provides continuity of care for clients, both in terms of staff and living arrangements, and that little will change for the patients. "For them, Thursday will be no different than Wednesday," James Walsh, acting director at SIDC, said.

The biggest impact will be for the 340 staff members, who will now become provisional state employees, with salaries equal to their current earnings.

Because the state has a higher pay scale than UCP, there is also the potential of raises if they are hired permanently, along with better benefits. Walsh said that employees will be allowed to take Civil Service exams to qualify for permanent employment.