

UCP employees get ready for state takeover

By MARC DAVIS

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At Building 14 of the Karl D. Warner Center, the line of men and women waiting to be fingerprinted stretched from one end of the room to the other. They waited patiently but nervously, forms in hand, to become state employees.

"We feel low down a little," said Rosalie Salman, a therapy aide. "It takes time for everyone to get adjusted."

Starting Thursday, 138 of the 340 employees at the Warner Center will give up their jobs with United Cerebral Palsy of New York State and become provisional employees of the state.

No jobs will be lost. The pay won't change. The duties won't change. For the time being at least, as control of the Warner Center switches from UCP to the Staten Island Developmental Center, hardly anything will change except where the paychecks come from.

Still, many employees yesterday were nervous about the transition from UCP to the state.

"I don't know what's going on," said Cynthia Shuford, a rehabilitation aide. "I've only been here a couple of months and suddenly they're closing the place."

Actually, the center is not closing. It is simply changing owners.

An order allowing the transfer from UCP to the state was signed Friday by Judge John Bartels in Brooklyn Federal Court. The takeover will begin Thursday and will be completed by May 2.

The Warner Center consists of seven buildings, 280 residents and 340 employees. It has been operated by UCP since 1977.

Financial troubles, however, have forced UCP to give up the center. In October, the agency filed for Chapter 11 reorganization in federal Bankruptcy Court after running up a \$5 million debt in 1983.

Since the court order was signed Friday, UCP and the state have held eight meetings with small staff groups to explain how the transition will affect them. For the next six months, at least, all jobs will be retained, except for three administrative posts, and all salaries will stay the same, officials say.

Meanwhile, as the transition goes on, employees at each building will have to fill out several forms, be fingerprinted and perhaps take civil service exams to keep the jobs they have.

Most staffers yesterday seemed happy that they would be able to keep their jobs, but unsure about what the future holds for them.

"It's hard. I never worked for the state," said Janet Gianfortune, a clerk in Building 14, which is the first to be converted to state control. "I'm pretty much set in my ways."

"It's nerve-racking for some, sure," said Gloria Walkenfelder, personnel director at the center. "But it's not a total surprise. Everyone has heard rumors for a long time."

So far, officials said, there have been no problems from the employees or from the union now representing them or the unions that will represent them.

"The most important thing is that there will be no disruption of daily care for our clients," said Keith Penman, the center's director.

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