



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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Former Columbia County Group Home Employee Pleads Guilty to Abuse *Case prosecuted by the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs*

Taghkanic, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning today announced the conviction and sentencing of a Hudson man, who admitted he abused a person with developmental disabilities while employed by In Flight, Inc. of Red Hook.

Justin Carrasco (DOB: 10/30/90), appeared before the Hon. Robert Prochera in Taghkanic Town Court and pled guilty to:

- One count of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the second degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor.

"While direct care workers can encounter challenging individuals and situations -- this type of conduct is never justified," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "Today's action sends a strong message to custodians that we will aggressively prosecute those who mistreat people entrusted to their care."

Carrasco's arrest followed a joint investigation conducted by Troop K of the New York State Police and the Justice Center. The defendant admitted that he pushed the victim against a wall, put his hands around his neck and applied pressure in response to a behavior the service recipient was having. The victim suffered scratches and bruises.

Carrasco resigned his position, was placed on two years' probation, and waived his right to appeal any Justice Center administrative finding that may place him on a central register that contains the names of people prohibited from providing care to people with special needs in New York.

The Justice Center and its statewide hotline and incident reporting system began operations on June 30, 2013. It is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week by trained professionals who receive reports of allegations of abuse and neglect of people with special needs. Once a report is received by its Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline, it is logged and assessed. Serious cases of abuse or neglect are assigned to the Justice Center's investigation team or, when appropriate, to a local law enforcement agency for follow-up.

Through the services provided by the Justice Center's Individual and Family Support Unit-- victims, their families, personal representatives and guardians receive guidance and information

about the reporting and investigation process and support during criminal cases and court proceedings.

The Justice Center also maintains a statewide registry of all persons who have been found to be responsible for serious or repeated acts of abuse and neglect. Once placed on the registry, known as the "Staff Exclusion List" or SEL, they are prohibited by law from ever working again with people with disabilities or special needs.

In Flight Inc., is private provider agency licensed by the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). OPWDD is one of six state agencies under the jurisdiction of the Justice Center. The Justice Center also oversees certain facilities or programs that are operated, licensed or certified by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the State Education Department (SED).