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Staten Island DDSO Employee Arrested for Allegedly Assaulting Person in Her Care

Incident Reported to NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Hotline

Staten Island, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced today that Marilyn Bell (DOB: 12/12/66) who is employed as Direct Support Assistant at the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO) was arrested for allegedly assaulting a person in her care at the Learn and Earn Program following an investigation conducted by Justice Center investigators. The facility is operated by the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

The incident first came to the attention of law enforcement officials when a staff member reported the incident to the Justice Center's Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline. A call center representative opened a case tracking file. Justice Center investigators initiated an investigation and made the arrest with assistance from the Richmond County District Attorney's office.

Bell was arraigned on December 23, 2013 on a Misdemeanor Complaint in Richmond County Criminal Court charging her with:

- One count of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent Person in the 2nd degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor;
- One count of Assault in the third degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor; and
- One count of Harassment in the 2nd degree, a Violation.

According to the complaint, the defendant allegedly held the victim by the throat and hit him in the face and neck causing injury. Bell has been placed on administrative leave. The case is being prosecuted by the Richmond County District Attorney's Office.

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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 (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.

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.

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

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Editor’s note: In compliance with Disciplinary Rule 7-107A of the Code of Professional Responsibility, you are advised that a charge is an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.