

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 11, 2013
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Group Home Employee Arrested on Felony Sex Charge

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

Camillus, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced today that Markeem Chaplin (11/11/91), who is employed at Toomey Residential and Community Services has been arrested for allegedly having sexual contact with a 16-year-old resident of the group home following an investigation conducted by the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office. The facility is licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services.

The incident first came to the attention of law enforcement officials when a staff member at the facility reported the incident to the Justice Center's Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline. A call center representative opened a case tracking file. The Town of Camillus Police Department was alerted and referred the case to the Sheriff's Office Abused Persons Unit, which launched an investigation with assistance from Justice Center investigators.

Chaplin, who lives at 202 South Avenue, Syracuse, was arrested October 3, 2013 on a Felony Complaint charging him with:

- One count of Criminal Sexual Act in the third degree, a class "E" Felony;
- One count of Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a class "A" Misdemeanor.

Chaplin was arraigned on the charges in Town of Camillus Court and remanded to the Onondaga County Justice Center where he is being held on \$15,000 bail. He was terminated from his position. The case is being prosecuted by the Onondaga 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 of Children and Family Services 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 for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Mental Health, (OMH), 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.