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Putnam Hospital Employee Arrested for Allegedly Striking Elderly Patient in His Care

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

Carmel, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced today that Laverne Pinckney (DOB: 07/03/73), who was employed as a mental health worker at Putnam Hospital Center was arraigned in Putnam County Court on a two count indictment charging him with abusing an elderly patient in his care. The arrest was the result of an investigation conducted by the Justice Center. The NYS Office of Mental Health licenses the hospital's inpatient psychiatric unit.

The incident first came to the attention of law enforcement officials when it was reported to the Justice Center's Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline. A call center representative opened a case tracking file and Justice Center investigators launched an investigation.

The indictment charges Pinckney, who is a resident of Peekskill with:

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

According to the indictment Pinckney is alleged to have recklessly endangered the welfare of the elderly patient who was being treated in the hospital's psychiatric unit. Pinckney was arraigned in Putnam County Court and was released on his own recognizance. He had previously been terminated from his position. The case is being prosecuted by Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor Christina Calabrese.

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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 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.

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 Mental Health (OMH) 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 People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), 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.