

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** September 17, 2013  
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## **NYS JUSTICE CENTER INVESTIGATORS MAKE 1<sup>ST</sup> ARREST**

### *Queens Group Home Worker Faces Criminal Charges for Allegedly Punching and Threatening to Kill Resident*

Queens, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced today an arrest in an alleged case of abuse against a resident of The Children's Village, a group home in Flushing, following an investigation conducted by the Justice Center. According to the complaint, a staff member allegedly punched the resident in the face, threatened to kill the teen and obtained a knife before being stopped by another staff member.

Criminal charges have been filed against Tanasha Brown (DOB: 02/17/86), who is employed as a community sociotherapist at the facility, which is under contract with the NYC Administration for Children's Services to provide residential care to juvenile delinquents.

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 and Justice Center investigators launched an investigation. The case will be prosecuted by Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown.

"I want to extend my appreciation to District Attorney Brown and his office for the assistance they provided to our investigators in this case," said Gunning. "The Justice Center is committed to building strong partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, DA's offices, and the courts throughout the state to ensure that we succeed in our common goal to bring justice to people with special needs who have been victimized while in state care."

The defendant who lives at 1700 Davidson Avenue, Bronx, NY, is scheduled to be arraigned later today in Queens County Criminal Court on a Misdemeanor Complaint charging her with:

- one count of Assault in the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor;
- one count of Menacing in 2<sup>nd</sup> degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor;
- one count of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the 4<sup>th</sup> degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor;
- one count of Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a class "A" Misdemeanor; and
- one count of Harassment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree, a violation;

Brown has been terminated from her position.

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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 of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), 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.