



## News Release

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### **Plattsburgh Group Home Counselor Charged with Rape**

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

Plattsburgh, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced today that Stephanie Duquette (DOB: 8/27/80), who was employed as a counselor at the Champlain Home for Children was arrested for allegedly engaging in a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old resident following an investigation conducted by the Plattsburgh Police Department. The facility is licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Families (OCFS).

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 Plattsburgh Police initiated a criminal investigation.

Duquette was arrested October 18, 2013 on a Felony Complaint charging her with:

- One count of Rape in the Third Degree, a class "E" Felony; and
- One count of Unlawfully Dealing with a Child in the First Degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor.

According to the complaint, the defendant provided alcohol to and engaged in a sexual relationship with the resident, who due to age was incapable of consent. The relationship allegedly continued for several months after the victim had left the group home. Duquette was no longer employed at the facility at the time of her arrest. She was arraigned on the charges in City of Plattsburgh Court and released on her own recognizance. The case is being prosecuted by the Clinton County District Attorney's office.

-Continued on page 2-

## **Page 2 –Plattsburgh Group Home Counselor Charged With Rape**

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 (OCFS) 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.