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Justice Center Launches New Statewide Criminal Justice Training Academy

Classes Feature Niagara University First Responders Disability Awareness Curriculum

Delmar, NY -- The NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs (Justice Center), which was established by Governor Cuomo and the Legislature, today launched its new Criminal Justice Training Academy for law enforcement officers.

In his 2014 State of the State address, the Governor directed the Justice Center to expand its statewide training programs to ensure that state and local law enforcement agencies are educated about its mandate, jurisdiction and the critical role it plays in criminal investigations related to the abuse and neglect of New Yorkers with special needs.

The Academy's comprehensive training sessions also educate participants about the resources the Justice Center provides to law enforcement agencies. The 2-day training programs include curriculum from the highly regarded *Niagara University First Responders Disability Awareness Training for Law Enforcement Officers* course. Among the topics that will be covered are an overview of disabilities, victimization of persons with disabilities, and the responsibilities of mandated reporters.

"This statewide training initiative seeks to change the way the criminal justice system responds to incidents and allegations of abuse and neglect involving vulnerable victims to ensure they have the same protections as the general population," said Jeff Wise, Justice Center Executive Director.

"The New York State Association of Chiefs of Police welcomed the creation of the Justice Center and the training, expertise, and cooperation that it would foster with our officers," said Association President, Chief Michael D. Ranalli (Town of Glenville Police Department). "The investigation of incidents involving people with special needs has always been a challenge for law enforcement. The impact of abuse and neglect on both the victim and the family can be devastating. They have a right to feel comfortable and confident that their vulnerable family member will be protected and that any incidents will be properly investigated."

The Justice Center, which began operations on June 30, 2013, serves as a law enforcement agency which seeks to ensure that individuals who receive services from a facility or provider operated, licensed or certified by six state agencies are protected from abuse, neglect and mistreatment. The agency works in partnership with state and local law enforcement agencies to thoroughly investigate the most serious cases of abuse and neglect reported to its 24/7 toll-free hotline. The Justice Center's Special Prosecutor/Inspector General possesses concurrent jurisdiction with local District Attorneys to ensure criminal activity is prosecuted to the full extent of the law.