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**1st Arrest Made in Case Reported to  
NYS Justice Center for Protection of People with Special Needs Hotline**

*Social Worker Employed by OMH Provider Charged with Raping Woman in His Care*

A licensed social worker at The Guidance Center of Westchester, a mental health services provider certified by the NYS Office of Mental Health was arrested following an investigation conducted by the New Rochelle Police Department and the Sex Crimes Bureau of the Westchester County District Attorney's office. The incident was first reported to the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs, which took initial reports and provided assistance in the investigation.

The arrest of Nelson Acevedo, (DOB 11/6/70) who is employed as a counselor at The Guidance Center of Westchester in New Rochelle was announced today by Patricia E. Gunning, who serves as Special Prosecutor and Inspector General for the Justice Center and Westchester County District Attorney Janet DiFiore.

Acevedo of 1 Beaufort Place, New Rochelle was arraigned Monday, August 12, 2013 in New Rochelle City Court on a Felony Complaint charging him with:

- One count of Rape in the Third Degree, a class "E" Felony
- Two counts of Sexual Abuse in the Third Degree, class "B" Misdemeanors

It is alleged that the defendant raped a woman he was counseling at the Guidance Center. Bail was set at \$100,000 cash or bond. As a result of the investigation, Acevedo is also facing disciplinary charges and has been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the case.

The incident came to the attention of law enforcement officials when The Guidance Center staff reported the allegation to the Justice Center's Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) hotline. A call center representative processed the report and instructed the provider to call the New Rochelle Police Department which immediately launched an investigation.

"Nelson Acevedo is the first person to be criminally charged in case reported to the Justice Center," said Ms. Gunning. "His arrest should serve as a warning that the Justice Center and the District Attorneys of this state will not hesitate to prosecute behavior that violates, endangers or causes injuries to individuals with developmental disabilities or mental illness."

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“Children, the elderly and people with special needs are some of society’s most vulnerable. To have the same people who they seek out for help and protection exploit and abuse them is the worst type of betrayal,” said District Attorney DiFiore. “The ability to quickly be able to report the abuse, as in this case through the Justice Center’s hotline, enables investigations to be launched, subsequent prosecutions to move forward and to ultimately hold the perpetrators accountable. “

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.

“Governor Cuomo established the Justice Center to ensure that allegations of abuse and neglect against individuals with special needs will be tracked and promptly investigated,” said Jeffrey Wise, Executive Director of the Justice Center. “We will provide any and all support needed by prosecutors across the state.”

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, they are prohibited by law from ever working again with people with disabilities or special needs.

The Guidance Center of Westchester, where some of the alleged incidents took place is certified by the Office of Mental Health, 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 Department of Health (DOH), the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), and the State Education Department (SED).

-end release-

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.