



## Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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### **Former William George Agency Instructor Accused of Viewing Sexually Explicit Materials with Students**

*Case investigated and prosecuted by the Justice Center*

Freeville, NY – NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor/Inspector General Patricia E. Gunning today announced the arrest of a former instructor of The William George Agency for Children’s Services on charges he viewed sexually explicit materials with his students, made abusive and offensive remarks to them, and threatened one of them.

Derrick Lawrence (DOB: 06/18/1961) of Preble, N.Y. was arrested on the following charges:

- Three counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a class A misdemeanor; and
- Four counts of Harassment in the 2nd Degree, a violation.

The Justice Center has investigated and will be prosecuting this case.

“The youth who attend William George and their families expect that the facility will provide a useful education that will give the students opportunities for success in the future,” said Special Prosecutor Gunning. “Instead, in this case the defendant chose to threaten, neglect and expose the youth to inappropriate material. The Justice Center will continue to bring charges against those who would endanger the welfare of our young people in care.”

Lawrence, who was terminated from his position, was responsible for instructing students on automobile repair, is alleged to have watched sexually explicit videos in his office with his students. Additionally, he allegedly made offensive comments to the students, including about bestiality, and repeatedly called the youths criminals. Lawrence also threatened to burn one of the youths.

The defendant was arraigned before the Honorable Jules Ravo of the Town of Dryden Town Justice Court. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and is due back in court on May 4. Assistant Special Prosecutor Robin Unwin is prosecuting the case.

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. Through the services provided by the Justice Center’s Individual and Family Support Unit – victims, their families, personal representatives and guardians receive guidance and information about the reporting and investigation process and support during criminal cases and court proceedings.

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 William George Agency is licensed and certified by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and the State Education Department (SED). These agencies are one among six state agencies which have programs 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 Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), and the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH).

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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.*



*Derrick Lawrence (DOB: 06/18/1961)*