



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Justice Center Outlines Outreach Efforts for Month of April

NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs' officials and staff members, as part of the agency's ongoing efforts to keep the public informed about its activities and laws related to reporting and investigating allegations of abuse and neglect against people with special needs, conducted several presentations across New York State during the month of April.

The agency made six presentations whose audiences included families, service recipients and not-for-profit providers, with more than 1,000 people in attendance in total. The presentations were made on location and over the web in Buffalo, New York City, Rockland County and Albany.

"The purpose of our presentations are two-fold: to receive feedback from our stakeholders about our work, and how we can improve operations to provide an overview of the requirements as outlined in the Protection of People with Special Needs Act, and," said Justice Center Chief of Staff and Director of Outreach and Education, Davin Robinson.

In April, the Justice Center presented to the Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York; START Treatment and Recovery Centers in Albany, ARC of Rockland Self-Advocates; and officials representing 853 Schools in Albany.

Recently, Justice Center assistant special prosecutors participated in a series of events in commemoration of Crime Victims Week. Justice Center investigators also recently gave a two-day seminar to Criminal Justice Program students at SUNY Oneonta.

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 criminal in nature, 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 Justice Center oversees certain facilities or programs that are operated, licensed or certified by the Office of People With Developmental Disabilities, Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), and the State Education Department (SED).

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