



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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Bronx Group Home Counselor Indicted on Felony Counts for Attacking Service Recipient in His Care

Joint Prosecution by Justice Center & Bronx District Attorney's Office

Bronx, NY – NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced a Bronx man, employed by Community Access, a nonprofit which provides services to people receiving mental health services, was indicted for repeatedly punching a person who was in his care in the face, rendering the victim unconscious.

William Roberts (DOB: 04/14/59) was arraigned in Bronx Supreme Court before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Ethan Greenberg and pleaded not guilty to:

- One count of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree, a class "E" felony;
- One count of Endangering the Welfare of a Vulnerable Elderly Person, or an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the Second Degree, a class "E" felony; and,
- One count of Assault in the Third Degree, a class "A" misdemeanor.

The defendant has been terminated from his position. He was released on \$2000 bail and is due back in court on July 25, 2016.

"People who are receiving mental health care services deserve equal access to the law," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "Joint prosecutions, such as the case against this defendant, will ensure that all available law enforcement resources are brought to bear on those who would injure patients in their care. We are grateful to the Bronx District Attorney and her staff, for their dedication in bringing the resources of her office to bear in combatting the abuse and neglect of vulnerable persons in care. Together, we will work to hold this defendant accountable."

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said, "Crimes against especially vulnerable persons will not be tolerated. We will do everything possible to give a voice to victims who cannot speak for themselves, and bring them justice."

The charges in this case stem from an incident on May 21, 2015 in which the defendant is alleged to have punched the victim repeatedly in the face rendering the victim unconscious. The victim was treated at a local hospital and released.

The case was investigated by the Justice Center and is being co-prosecuted by Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor Edwin Ferguson and Bronx Assistant District Attorney KellyAnne Holohan.

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 facility where the alleged abuse occurred is licensed by the Office of Mental Health (OMH). OMH is one of six state agencies 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 for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the Office of Children and Family Services, (OCFS), the Department of Health (DOH), 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.



William Roberts (DOB: 04/14/59)